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# **From Cyrus to Abbas: Staging Persia in Early Modern England**

Hafiz Abid Masood

D Phil Early Modern Literature and Culture

University of Sussex

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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University in whole or part for the award of any other degree.

### **List of Abbreviations**

CSP Venice    *Calendar of State Papers...Relating to English Affairs...in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, ed. R. Brown, London 1864

L & P         *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign Henry VIII*, 21 Vols.  
London, 1864-1910

CSP Foreign Elizabeth    *Calendar of State Papers Foreign Series of the Reign of Elizabeth*  
ed. Arthur John Butler et.al. London 1880-1936

The abbreviations are followed by volume number and page number respectively.

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## University of Sussex

Hafiz Abid Masood, D. Phil Early Modern Literature and Culture

### From Cyrus to Abbas: Staging Persia in Early Modern England

#### Summary

This thesis considers the different ways Persia was perceived in early modern England. Persia, understudied in recent scholarship, played an important role in the early modern English imagination, both as a classical civilization and as a counterweight to the Ottoman threat to Christendom. This classical heritage and anti-Ottomanism, when intersected with a Persian Muslim identity, resulted in a complex phenomenon. This thesis is an attempt to understand the various cross currents that constructed this complex image. Chapter One discusses English interest in classical Persian themes in the wake of Renaissance humanism. It focuses on three classical ‘Persian’ plays featuring Achaemenid Kings; Cambyzes, Darius and Cyrus, and investigates how classical Persia became a focus of interest for Elizabethan playwrights. Chapter Two moves to the wars between the Ottomans and Safavids and how they fascinated many English writers of the time. Paying specific attention to Usumcasane in Marlowe’s *Tambulaine* plays, the chapter suggests the significance of Persian references in the play and offers a new interpretation of the notorious Qur’an burning scene. Chapter Three analyses John Thomas Minadoi’s *Historie of Warres betweene the Turkes and the Persians* and shows the significance of Christian knowledge of schism in Islam for Catholic-Protestant debates. Chapter Four concentrates on the representation of Persia in Romance texts from late Elizabethan England and shows that despite being hailed as an anti-Ottoman power, Persia’s anti-Christian Islamic identity, which was also suggested by Minadoi, becomes manifest in the alliance of ‘Sultan’ and ‘Sophy’ against the Crusaders. Chapter Five combines two crucial moments in Anglo-Persian encounters: Jenkinson’s trading mission and the ‘travailes” of the Sherley brothers. Through an analysis of the play *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*, the argument of the chapter is that it represents the cumulative experience of Englishmen in Persia in the early modern period.

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## Introduction

The phenomenal rise in studies of the representation of Islam and Muslims in early modern English literature in the last decade has mainly focussed on the Ottoman Turks and African Moors as is demonstrated in a recent bibliography (Masood, 2005). The central position of Ottomans and Africans in such studies can be explained with reference to their presence as central figures in two of the most canonical of English dramatists, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, in particular in *Tamburlaine* I and II and *Othello*. Turks and Moors, however, were not the only Muslim communities that Englishmen came across in the early modern period. The two other important Muslim empires were the Mughals and the Safavid Persians. Mughal India has been paid some attention in early modern east-west relations by scholars like Jyotsna Singh, Pompa Banerjee and Richmond Barbour among others (Singh, 1996; Banerjee, 2003; Barbour, 2003). These studies, however, are not concerned with how the English interaction with the Mughal Empire brought about a change in attitudes towards Islam in Early Modern England. Safavid Persia, then is the territory that has been largely ignored by recent scholarship working on early modern Anglo-Islamic relations with the result that our understanding of English perceptions of Islam and Muslims in the early modern period today is based on Anglo-Ottoman or Anglo-African contacts and is consequently partial. This thesis aims at broadening this understanding by closely studying the representation of Persia in early modern English writings.

In January 1540 Sir Thomas Wyatt was in France as Henry VIII's ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. The purpose of his visit was to persuade the Emperor to hand over one of the English rebels in his royal train as required by the treaties between the Holy Roman Empire and England. After meeting the Emperor, Wyatt sent a despatch to Henry VIII which describes what transpired in that meeting:

Had access to his Majesty, along with Tate, on Twelfth Even after dinner, who after reading the king's letters and reading credence, asked who the rebel was. Said, Brancetour. "Ah, quod he, Robert? That same, Sir, quod I. I shall tell you, quod he, Monsieur l'Embassadour, it is he that hath been in Perse. As he saith, quod I. No, quod he, I know it by good tokens; for when I sent the knight of the Rhodes, he of



Piemont, with charge to the Sophi, through Turkey, he fell sick, and this man, for the love he knew between the king and me, helped him; and in conclusion, when he saw he should die, he opened his charge unto this man and told him what service he should do to me and to all Christendom, if he would undertake it. And he did so and it seemed true, for the King of Perse the same time did invade, and he went about the tother way by the sailing of the Portygalles and brought me sure tokens of the man as well what money I gave him and other things (L&P, 15, 15).

This lively excerpt from Wyatt's account foregrounds some important themes that are central to this study. Wyatt wrote this letter in early 1540, at least two decades before the first group of English traders reached Persia under the leadership of Anthony Jenkinson, so this surprising episode allows us to locate the origins of England's interest in Persia as early as the reign of Henry VIII.

When Charles V was informed by Sir Thomas Wyatt that Henry VIII demanded Robert Brancetour as his rebel, his response to Wyatt was "it is he that hath been in Perse." What would have "Perse" meant for Sir Thomas Wyatt or for Henry VIII when he read this letter? Where was it located? Why was Robert Brancetour in Persia? Wyatt's immediate response to the Emperor is to express his disbelief in Brancetour's claim to have visited "Perse" which he thought would be enough to convince the Emperor of the "false" claim of the rebel. But Charles was fully equipped with the evidence of his visit to Persia, which consisted of "sure tokens."

The way Persia is mentioned in this account reveals that it was not an entirely unknown territory for Thomas Wyatt. Neither was it so for Henry VIII who must have learnt about Persia from a variety of diplomatic reports that reached his court from the time he ascended the English throne. One such example is a letter from the Pope Clement VII to Henry VIII. Writing on 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1532, the Pope laments the fact that divided Christendom is going to be an easy prey to the enemies of Christ. In order to heighten the impact, the Pope informs Henry: "The enemies of the Christ are agreed to combat the Faith, and our people cannot agree to defend it; so let us place the neck under the yoke, and accept Mahomet instead of Christ" (CSP Venice, 4, 312). The letter is a last ditch effort to persuade Henry VIII to come forward and defend Christendom. The gravity of the Ottoman threat is

perceived to be so great because of recent reports received by the Pope of a developing friendship between the Sophy and the Sultan: “Solyman is so linked by a new friendship with the Sophy, King of the Persians, while waging this war, he will have nothing to fear” (CSP Venice, 4, 312). The coming together of the enemies of Christ is clearly intended to apply to the new friendship of the Sophy and the Sultan which also reveals an ambivalence towards Persia that continues throughout the period under study. The Persian Sophy is a “good Muslim” when he is fighting against the Ottomans, but as soon as he befriends the Ottomans, he is an enemy of Christ and borrowing Mahmood Mamdani’s term again a “bad Muslim”(Mamdani, 2004).

The English and larger Christian attitude towards Persia in the first half of the sixteenth century can thus be characterized as balanced between hope and fear. The hope of continuous struggle between the Ottomans and the Persians and the fear that they stop fighting which would be fatal for Christendom as the Ottomans would be free to attack their Christian enemy in the west. A keen interest in diplomatic exchanges between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians was taken in the early modern period as any peace agreement between the two had a potentially great impact on the fate of Christendom. In order to ensure that wars between the two continued, some Christian princes sent envoys to the Persian king to assure him of Christian aid in his wars against their common enemy. Robert Brancetour’s visit to Persia was the result of just such an initiative by the Holy Roman Emperor.

In Sir Thomas Wyatt’s report, the Holy Roman Emperor does not reveal the reason for his envoy’s visit to Persia. The knight of Rhodes is said to be going to Persia “with charge to the Sophy” and later on we learn of the significance of the visit when it is mentioned that if Robert undertakes the mission, he would do a great service not only to the Holy Roman Emperor but to the whole of Christendom. The ambiguity of the “charge to the Sophy” is further evidence that Wyatt as well as Henry VIII was aware what the whole episode was about. Wyatt did not feel the need to tell the story explicitly since reports of an Englishman’s visit to Persia had been sent to England a few years prior to Wyatt’s letter. One mentions Robert as a soldier in the Persian army against the Ottomans. It was sent from Padua, and according to it “...an Englishman named Robt. Brensteur, who made his

fortune in Venice, was sent by the Emperor to “the King of Sophye” and is now chief captain against the Turk” (L&P, 6, 147). Another report that was sent to Henry VIII himself also deals with the same subject: “The Sophy has taken Trebisonde. An Englishman in the Emperor’s court four years ago went to the Sophy to provoke him to war upon the Turk” (L&P, 6, 370). An Englishman in Persia in early 1530s was unusual and newsworthy. While reading the letter by Wyatt, Henry must have recalled these earlier reports: Brancetour was both a renegade and of political value. Henry was no doubt interested in both Persia and in his fate.

Charles V’s efforts to incite the Sophy against the ‘Turk’ were a subject of discussion in Henry’s court at almost the same time when reports about Robert were despatched to England in 1533. We find a glimpse of this discussion in a letter written by Chapuys, Charles’s ambassador at Henry VIII’s court. In a long despatch, he informs the Emperor of the different activities at the English court including the christening of Elizabeth, the future Queen. He then narrates a conversation at a dinner table between himself and the Duke of Norfolk. One of the diners appreciated the efforts of Charles V in hindering the ‘Turk’ through the “Sofi” and that the Emperor “had done a great good to Christendom by finding means of moving the said Sofi” (L&P, 6, 170-71). The “means of moving the Sofi” is a veiled reference to Robert Brancetour who was said to have gone to Persia to incite the Sophy to war upon the ‘Turk’. The Duke of Norfolk, however, hinted to the company “that there were Christian princes who had greater intelligence with the Sofi” than the Holy Roman Emperor. He goes no further. Chapuys interpreted Norfolk’s response in the context of royal rivalry, and responded that his master, the Emperor had no “jealousy, but great pleasure at the intelligence of other princes with the Sophy, which was much more praiseworthy than having it with the Turk, Barbarossa, or the king of Fez” (L&P, 6, 471). That a relationship with the Persian Sophy could be considered far better than a relationship with the ‘Turk’, Barbarossa or the King of Fez is a key element of early modern conceptions of Safavid Persia.

An overarching theme from Papal efforts to incite Persians against ‘Turks’ onwards is that the Persian and ‘Turks’ are different from each other and their difference can be exploited for the benefit of Christendom. Though the understanding of this difference between the

Ottomans and the Safavids was very superficial in the first half of the sixteenth century, it became more nuanced in the latter half of the century.

Aside from a 1961 article by J. J. Scarisbrick, Robert Brancetour and his Persian connection have not been accorded any importance in early modern scholarship, and Scarisbrick is interested only on account of Brancetour's return from Persia to Europe on a Portuguese ship, as Charles V mentions at the end of the excerpt quoted above. According to the author, this made Robert the first Englishman to round the Cape of Good Hope (Scarisbrick, 1961). Yet his travel to Persia makes him the first Englishman in Safavid Persia, a forerunner of Anthony Jenkinson and other Muscovy company agents who went to Persia in 1560s and 1570s as well as the more celebrated Sherley Brothers who reached Persia towards the end of the sixteenth century. Apart from being a forerunner of the Sherley Brothers, he has another feature common with them. Both the Sherleys and Brancetour were condemned by their English monarch as renegades and rebels. Moreover, both had Catholic leanings which, coupled with their status as long distance travellers, was instrumental in transforming them into renegades (Ridley, 1984, 336-37).

Like Brancetour and later the Sherleys, conceptions of Persia in early modern England were multiple, unstable and contradictory. Nevertheless, there were three major trajectories within such conceptions. The first trajectory deals with images of Safavid Persia and the threat it posed to the Ottoman Empire in the East. The wars between the Safavids and the Ottomans intrigued many in Christian Europe who were curious to know their causes. One set of reports circulating in Europe in the early modern period interpreted the Persian Shah as Christian or pseudo-Christian whose rise was the result of God's providential plan to save Christians in the West from Ottoman wrath. In their anti-Ottomanism, the European Christians and Safavid Persians had a common feature which allowed them to identify each other as allies. However, a religious identification between Persians and Christians could not hold sway for long as more accurate reports concerning the rivalry between them started reaching Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The agents of the English Muscovy Company who reached Persia in 1562 under the leadership of Anthony Jenkinson sent home more detailed reports about the nature of differences between the two neighbours. The emphasis of these reports was on sectarian

rather than religious difference. Without calling the Persians and Ottomans Shi'i and Sunni respectively, these reports, for the first time in English, explained beliefs regarding the rightful successor of the Prophet Muhammad that gave the Persians and the Ottoman Turks their distinctive identities. This emphasis on sectarian politics among Muslims introduced English readers to the figures of "Mortus Ali" and the other three companions of the Prophet Muhammad: Abu Bakr, Umar and Usman, who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad as leaders of the Muslim community. Prior to this knowledge of the schismatic differences between the Ottomans and Persians, the only Muslim figure known to the English reader was the Prophet Muhammad.

One crucial aspect of this information about schism in Islam was its understanding and appropriation in terms of the Catholic-Protestant schism in Christianity. Parallels were drawn between the beginning of schism in Christianity and in Islam, explaining the nature of difference between the Sunni and Shi'a in the division between Catholic and Protestant. The Persian form of Islam is sometimes equated with Catholicism and at other times with Protestantism, and this association is also unstable (like the general image of Persia in the period) and depends upon the beliefs of the commentator. Moreover, these schisms intersected with each other and at one point Shi'a-Sunni rivalry had grave consequence for Catholic-Protestant rivalry. It was in the wake of Anglo-Spanish hostilities that Queen Elizabeth I sought Ottoman help to deal with the Catholic Spanish threat but the Sunni Ottoman Sultan was himself threatened by the Shi'a Safavid Shah. This reveals how sectarian divisions within Christianity and Islam were thought to be interconnected and how Catholic-Protestant-Shi'a-Sunni interests diverged and converged in the early modern world.

The failure of Jenkinson to get trading privileges for the English from the Persian Sophy led to complications within this trajectory. As the Persian Sophy refused to have any trade links with the English owing to his recently concluded peace agreement with the Ottomans, the English recognized that the difference between the Ottoman and Safavids was not too big to be bridged. They could unite despite their sectarian differences. This element is developed more fully in the work of the Italian physician John Thomas Minadoi, who represents both Ottomans and Persians as "barbarians" with the defeat of either side

considered good for Christendom. Though Minadoi's work played an important role in differentiating between Ottomans and Safavid in late sixteenth century Europe, some episodes in his book left no doubt that there was a lot of common ground between them.

The first trajectory, then, presents a Persia that is unimaginable without the Ottoman Turk. Whether it is the early pseudo-Christian image or the later schismatic one, it rests on opposition to the Ottoman Turks. The episode of Brancetour in the 1530s, as well as the voyages of the agents of the Muscovy Company in 1560s and 70s and the later "travailes" of the Sherley Brothers in late 1590s, all had the underlying assumption of Persian anti-Ottomanism as their driving force and inspiration. This shows the resilience of this conception of Persia in the English imagination in the sixteenth century and it crops up again and again throughout the century.

The second trajectory concerns the representation of ancient Persia in early modern English texts. It was the Achamaenid kings, Cyrus, Darius and Cambyses who were the major focus of interest in this period. Two important sources that contributed to the development of this image were the Bible and texts of classical antiquity. The two major classical texts that influenced English conceptions of ancient Persia were Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Herodotus' *Histories*. The image of Persian kings based on the Bible is largely positive, as is the image that emerges from Xenophon's work. In opposition, the image inspired by Herodotus carries negative connotations and the most important example of this is the story of Cambyses' tyranny against one of his advisors, his incestuous marriage and cruel punishment of a corrupt judge.

This image was the result of humanist interest in classical learning. The Protestant translation and dissemination of the Bible in the vernacular made it easily accessible and the Bible reading public was familiar with both Cyrus and Darius. References to Cyrus and Darius were not the only mentions of Persia in the Bible. In the *Book of Daniel*, the four divinely sanctioned empires that are symbolically represented include Persia. But above all, the story of the Magi from the East who reached Bethlehem to offer their gifts to the baby Jesus is the most significant reference. The visit of the Magi, who are called sometimes "Three Wise Men" and at other times "Three Kings" from the East is still celebrated in parts of the Christian world as part of Christmas ceremonies on 6<sup>th</sup> January each year. Magi

was the term used by the ancient Persians for their religious priests and thus has a clear connection with ancient Persia. In the Christian imagination, the Magi represented the universality of Christianity and the arrival of the Magi was a testimony to the divine nature of the Christian religion. This reveals that those who learnt of Persia from the Bible and other histories that represented ancient Persian Kings as paragons of virtue and nobility might have assumed close affinity between Persians and Christians.

Images of ancient Persia inspired both by the Bible and classical histories were on the whole positive. But there is another thread of classical images of Persia that turns it into an anti-Christian power. Since the Renaissance was a movement for the revival of classical learning from ancient Greece and Rome, the two civilizations and their texts were assigned high value in Renaissance culture. At the same time, when Herodotus' histories were translated into English in the sixteenth century, Persia emerged as an enemy of ancient Greek culture and civilization. Similarly, Alexander's invasion of Persia and his victory reinforced the same image of Perso-Greek enmity. Moreover, details of the wars between Roman Emperors and Sassanian Persians also became known in sixteenth century England through the publication of classical texts. One of the most popular examples that recur again and again in early modern Europe is the treatment of Emperor Valerian at the hands of Persian King Sapor I who used the Roman Emperor as a footstool to mount his horse (see Figure 1). The incident was also painted by Hans Holbein the Younger in around 1521 and it instantly reminds us of the treatment of Bajazeth by Tamburlaine in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* Part I. The anti-Christian side of this ancient Persian image is represented in the figure of another Persian, King Khosrau II (r. 590 to 628 AD), whose victorious army carried away the "True Cross" as a war trophy in 614 when they conquered Jerusalem and on this account he is dubbed as an anti-Christ in at least one medieval text (Lerner, 1985, 563).

The third trajectory of early modern English conceptions of Persia has its origin in the chronicles of the first crusade and demonstrates the continuity of ideas between medieval and early modern periods. Unlike the first trajectory that represented Persia as anti-Ottoman and pseudo-Christian, this loudly pronounces the Muslim identity of Persia and conflates it with the Ottoman Turks. This conception of Persia overlooks the differences between

Ottomans and Persians which were so popular a subject when this new conception started finding expression in England in the 1580s and 90s. The basic strategy used to show the similarity between the Ottomans and Persians was a change of nomenclature regarding the Persian ruler. The king of Persia who was known as the “Persian Sophy” in Europe since the beginning of Safavid rule in Persia in 1501 is given the title of “Sultan of Persia” which completely overturns the dynamics of Safavid-Ottoman enmity. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the most common usage of the term “Sultan” was exclusively for the Ottoman rulers, as is evident from the use of the term by Shakespeare and Marlowe in their plays. It is also through the same term “Sultan” that medieval notions of Persia crossed into the early modern English imagination. A number of medieval romances feature Persian rulers who are titled Sultan and they are represented as strongly Islamic and anti-Christian characters. It was the vogue for this romance model towards the end of the sixteenth century that influenced the late Elizabethan notion of the Persian Sophy, who becomes an ally of the Sultan of Babylon in Thomas Heywood’s *Four Prentices of London* in order to resist the joint forces of the crusaders. Thus the Persia of this trajectory is an anti-Christian state that is no different from the Ottoman Turks.

The three trajectories exist almost independently from each other in sixteenth and early seventeenth century English thought. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that suggests their overlapping, mainly concerning the first and the second strands. One example of this overlap is the use of the term Sophy for the Magi in some works dealing with Biblical interpretation. As one sense of the term Sophy meant “wise man” (like the meaning of the term Magi) the Magi and the Sophy were equated, establishing continuity between ancient and early modern Persians. Secondly, there is a strong sense in some early modern texts of the similarities between ancient and Safavid Persia in terms of the greatness and glory of Persia. For example, one of the accounts of Persia included in Pietro Martire d’Anghira’s *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies* (1577) has the following statement about Persian Empire: “The kyngdome or Empire of the *Persians* as it was in auncient tyme most famous, euen so is it at these dayes, mightie & glorious, comprehendynge many great & large regions” (Anghiera, 1577, 329). The two Persias overlap here once again. Another instance of similarity between the two is found in the figure of two representative kings of Persia, one each from ancient and early modern Persia: Cyrus the Great and Shah Abbas the



Great. This comparison of Shah Abbas with the ancient Persian Kings is most clearly expressed in the caption of an engraving of the Shah by Antwerp painter and engraver Dominicus Custos (see Figure 2). This portrait of Abbas is a perfect example of the intermixing of our trajectories where Shah Abbas is equated on the one hand with the ancient Persian Kings Darius, Cyrus and Cambyses and on the other hand, the wars of Abbas against the ‘Turks’ are also mentioned. Finally, one way to conflate ancient and early modern conceptions of Persia was through the agency of pagan deities that are invoked by the Persian Sophy and other Persian characters in the plays analysed in this work. This trend is exemplified by the Persian kings in *Tamburlaine* Part I, *Four Prentices of London*, and *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*. The trajectories and their cross fertilization in early modern England demonstrates the complexity and the resultant indeterminacy of the Persian image. Persia for early modern English readers and theatre goers meant so many things: a classical empire as well as an enemy of classical civilization, noble as well as anti-Christian, anti-‘Turk’ and ‘Turk’ at the same time. These contradictory strands result in the complex conception of Persia that is represented by John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins in their play *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* in 1607. The play usefully epitomizes Anglo-Persian encounters throughout this period, and incorporates all the conceptions and strands considered in this thesis.

The current wave of works on early modern England’s encounters with Islam is, no doubt, indebted to Edward Said’s groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978). There is, however, a feeling among scholars that the application of Orientalist model on early modern Anglo-Islamic relations has some obvious limitations. Both Matar and Vitkus agree on these limitations. According to Matar, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “...Britain did not enjoy military or industrial power over Islamic countries. Rather the Muslim had a power of self-representation which English writers knew they had either to confront or to engage” (Matar, 1998, 11-12). One of the most important factors for the rise of post-colonial theory was the publication of *Orientalism* and just as a Saidian model is unsuitable for the early modern period, so is a post-colonial model. Vitkus emphasizes this point: “The binary opposition of colonizer and colonized, so familiar in recent scholarship informed by postcolonial identity politics, cannot be maintained in a properly historicised description of England’s early modern culture” (Vitikus, 2003, 3). The position taken by Matar regarding Orientalism

earlier, later endorsed by Vitkus, has generally been accepted in the field. This thesis is also informed by the same theoretical model but it goes a little further arguing that the representation of Persia in early modern texts shatters the binary opposition of ‘East’ and ‘West’ or Islam and Christianity completely. While the negative stereotypes of Ottoman Turks and Moors may call for a partial application of the Orientalist model to early modern texts, one of the dominant conceptions of Persia as an antidote to the Ottomans portrays them as pro-Christian. The notion of a single, monolithic ‘Orient’ cannot be sustained in the light of such representations. Going further, this project argues that the concept of a monolithic Persia is problematic, like Said’s idea of the Orient. As the brief description of conceptions of Persia above demonstrates, and the chapters below will show, Persia in the early modern English mind was a complex entity which was constructed by a number of currents and cross currents. To understand this Persian phenomenon, one has to consider all the possible channels through which knowledge about Persia was being disseminated in early modern England. This is the project of this thesis.

Interest in the representation of Islam in the English Renaissance dates back to the second decade of the twentieth century when Louis Wann published his essay “The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama” (Wann, 1915) which, as Matthew Dimmock says, “mathematically chart[s] the range and extent of the field” (Dimmock, 2005, 10). He was followed by Warner G. Rice, whose doctoral thesis was submitted to Harvard University in 1926 (Rice, 1926). The impact of this work remained limited as it was never published. The most important work in terms of impact, however, was the book published by Samuel C Chew under the title *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* in 1937 (Chew, 1937). Any work on Anglo-Islamic relations cannot avoid mentioning Chew’s work. What distinguishes him, as well as Wann and Rice, from recent scholarship, is the attention that they paid to Persia in their work which is to a great extent absent from the current wave of studies on early modern Anglo-Islamic relations.

One of the reasons Persia has not attracted many recent early modern scholars is the trend set by earlier studies of Anglo-Islamic relations. Conversion to Islam was a potent threat to the early modern Christians who came into contact with the Ottoman Turks as well as Muslims from North Africa and a fear of conversion to Islam manifested itself in a number

of early modern plays like *Othello*, *The Renegado* and *A Christian Turned Turk*. Nabil Matar pioneered this trend by drawing attention to the notion of conversion in early modern thought popularly known as “turning Turk” in one of his articles and later his book, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685* (Matar, 1994; Matar, 1998). Daniel Vitkus’s article titled “Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor” and later his book *Turning Turk*, further elucidated the concept by showing the multiple meanings of the word “turning” (Vitkus, 1997). The significance of the trope of “turning” is also evident from Jonathan Burton’s book title *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579-1624* which devotes two chapters on conversion to and from Islam (Burton, 2005). The continued interest in conversion to Islam in early modern literature and culture is testified by the recent book by Jane Hwang Degenhardt (Degenhardt, 2010). The Safavid Persians, unlike the Ottoman Turks, were not perceived to be a threat to the Christian religion — in fact, the Safavid rulers and especially Shah Abbas were represented as great friends of Christians or possibly pseudo-Christians (Vaughan, 1954, 210; Matar, 1998, 130-31; Knobler, 1996). This is the reason for the expression “turning Turk” and we never find the expression “turning Persian,” which reveals the English perception of the difference between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians. It was not the fear of conversion to Islam in Persia that the Englishmen faced, rather it was the hope that the Persians would convert to Christianity as has been recently shown in an article (Houston, 2010). Had there been cases of Englishmen converting to Islam in Safavid Persia, the discourse of conversion from Matar to Degenhardt must have included these cases in their studies. This is one of the reasons why Persia has been pushed to the background of recent scholarship.

The regional focus of much of the recent work in Anglo-Islamic relations has been the Mediterranean. Since the publication of Fernand Braudel’s monumental book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, the sea came to symbolize one of the most important locations of cross-cultural exchanges between east and west. Daniel Vitkus highlights the impact of the “multicultural Mediterranean” on the early modern English imagination in his book *Turning Turk* (Vitkus, 2003). Goran Stanivokovic’s recent collection of essays *Remapping the Mediterranean in Early Modern English Writings* and a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* further affirms the centrality of the Mediterranean in England’s overseas commercial

ambitions and how this ambition influenced the literature of the time (Stanivukovic, 2007; Cantor, 2006; Danson, 2002). Persia's location, distant from the Mediterranean contact zone, makes it less attractive for scholars mainly interested in the Mediterranean region. An off-shoot of the interest in the Mediterranean Sea and in conversion is the rise of studies on piracy and captivity in early modern world (Vitkus, 2001; Jowitt, 2006; Jowitt, 2010). A number of works dealing with piracy and captivity have appeared in the last decade but since the Safavid Persians were active neither as pirates nor did they enslave Christians, they are necessarily absent from work dealing with this issue.

Since 1992, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America, early modern scholarship has been deeply invested in the impact of travel on early modern literature. From the study of travel to the 'New World' this gaze turned to the 'Old World' which resulted in a number of works dealing with travel narratives to the Orient in the early modern period. Persia seems likely to figure in such works, since it emerged as an important player in Anglo-Islamic politics through works on travel (as I will show below), but there are some important works that strangely efface Persia from the accounts of early modern travel. Andrew Hadfield, for example, in his erudite study of the impact of travel on English literature of the Renaissance has nothing to say about English travellers to Persia. Specifically, his chapter dealing with the location of Renaissance plays does not identify any play that is located in Persia (Hadfield, 1998). Similarly, his anthology of travel and colonial writing in English from 1550 to 1630 includes travel narratives of Europe, Africa, Americas, Near East, Far East and South Seas but Persia is again absent which reveals that either travel to Persia is erroneously considered too insignificant to be included in the anthology or perhaps imagined to be non-existent (Hadfield, 2001). An even more striking example of this treatment is Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna Singh's anthology of travel narratives from the early modern period which is divided into three parts which deal with the narratives from Levant, India and Africa respectively. Persia once more remains "undiscovered" in the early modern world (Kamps and Singh, 2001). Some other critics dealing with travel in the early modern Asia also miss out Persia like the above works (Archer, 2001; Carey, 2004; MacLean, 2004).

This marginalizing treatment of Persia apart, the first significant contribution to the study of Persia in early modern English scholarship was also made in the field of Renaissance travel writing. It was the publication of John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins' collaborative play *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* in an edited volume of three Renaissance travel plays edited by Anthony Parr who must be commended for adding this "Persian play" to his volume (Parr, 1999). The availability of the play in a modern edition, coupled with Parr's essay on the Sherley brothers a year later brought about a realization of the fact that Persia, like the Ottoman Turks and the Moors was an important subject of scholarly study (Parr, 1996). From this point on, Persia has gradually claimed its due share in literary scholarship. The only recent anthology of travel narratives to incorporate Persia is Kenneth Parker's *Early Modern Tales of the Orient*, which reflects this changing trend (Parker, 1999).

The Sherley brothers' episode dramatized by Day, Rowley and Wilkins and performed in London in 1607 is the most well known event in Anglo-Persian relations, a history virtually unknown to early modern scholarship. Nabil Matar, suggests that "...notwithstanding the Shirley brothers' attempts in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods to bring about an English-Persian alliance, there was not much interaction with the realm of the Sophie and with the language and civilization of Persia" (Matar, 1998, 3). The statement is partially valid as not many people spoke or understood non-European languages in the early modern period but it is not correct to suggest that "there was not much interaction with the realm of the Sophie" since, as this thesis demonstrates, the English had a clear understanding of the role Persia might play in the balancing of power in early modern world from the 1530s and 1540s. Jenkinson and later traders who went to Persia before the Anglo-Ottoman capitulation in 1580 are utterly ignored in terms of Anglo-Persian relations. By the time Matar published his second book *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (1999), Persia had taken the form of a project to be undertaken: "Before a study of the impact of Persian and Mughal Muslims on Renaissance England is conducted—a project that has yet to be undertaken—an investigation of the impact of Turks and Moors of the Ottoman Empire and North Africa must be completed" (Matar, 1999, 4-5).

This project has, until now, not been undertaken. Not a single book that really addresses the multivalent aspects of Anglo-Persian relations in the early modern period has been published, though a number of scholars have shown an interest in Persia by publishing papers and/or book chapters on aspects of Anglo-Persian relations. Apart from Anthony Parr, the pioneer, the most important scholar who has drawn attention to Persia is Linda McJannet (McJannet, 1999). McJannet's article was the first to emphasize the complexity of the Persian image in early modern England. Her two tables enumerating the plays concerning Persia in the early modern English corpus highlighted the widespread appeal of Persian themes for English playwrights. Other important contributors to the emerging field of early modern Anglo-Persian relations are Chloe Houston, Bernadette Andrea, Jane Grogan, Ladan Niayesh, Jonathan Burton, Laurence Publicover, Matthew Birchwood, Javad Ghatta, Kurosh Meshkat and Hasan Pirnajmuddin. The names of Muhammad Taghi Nezam-Mafi, and Vali-Erfanian T Baghal-kar should also be added to the list.

One of the major limitations of contemporary work on Persia is the interest generated by the Sherley brothers in early Jacobean England. This focus has resulted in a lop-sided image of Persia in recent scholarship. Anthony Parr's essay and the introduction to the play in his edition concern the Sherley brothers. Bernadette Andrea's first essay on Robert Sherley's Circassian wife Teresia explores the role of gender in Anglo-Persian encounters, though in her more recent work concerning Persia she is trying to expand the horizon of her studies backward and forward in time (Andrea 2005; Andrea, 2010a; Andrea 2010b). Jonathan Burton's essay on the Sherley brothers offers a fresh perspective on the topic through a contrapuntal reading of the Persian embassy to Europe under Anthony Sherley and the Persian Hussain Ali Beg (Burton, 2009). Rather than assigning a central position to European accounts of the embassy, Burton compares and contrasts the European accounts with the account written by Don Juan of Persia, one of the Persian secretaries of the embassy who converted to Catholicism in Rome and later settled in Spain (Khair et.al., 2006; Rahimieh, 2001, 21-38; Smith, 1992; Ghaheri, 1998). Laurence Publicover's recent article demonstrates the popularity of the *The Travailes* by analysing contemporary allusions to the play in other dramatic works as well as by analysing the repertory (Publicover, 2010). Chloe Houston's articles, though mainly concerned with the 17<sup>th</sup> century, are an attempt to move away from a narrow focus on the Sherley phenomenon.

One deals with the representation of Persia in some 17<sup>th</sup> century travel narratives while another focuses on a discourse of “converting Persia” in early modern texts (Houston, 2009; Houston, 2010). Ladan Niayesh’s essay, titled “Shakespeare’s Persians,” is an important contribution towards a holistic perception of Persia in early modern England (Niayesh, 2008). Though still mainly concerned with the Sherleys, she recognizes the multiple identities of Persia by calling Persians “Muslims of an unusual kind” (137). She also suggests that the character of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* might have been influenced by Shakespeare’s knowledge of Anthony Sherley (Niayesh, 2008, 144).

There are a few articles that study the non-Sherley image of Persia. Kurosh Meshkat has analysed the travel narrative of Anthony Jenkinson (Meshkat, 2009). Jenkinson was the first Englishman to go to Safavid Persia with official letters from the Queen to the Persian Sophy. Hossein Pirnajmuddin has shed some light on Spenser’s knowledge of Persia in one of his articles (Pirnajmuddin, 2005). Matthew Birchwood’s chapter on Robert Baron’s *Mirza* and John Denham’s *The Sophy* is a fascinating study of the use of Persia in highlighting English domestic problems (Birchwood, 2007). Javad Ghatta analyses Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* as well as *The Travails of the Three English Brothers* to show the multiplicity of Persian identity in early modern drama (Ghatta, 2009). He demonstrates the mixing of classical as well as contemporary narratives about Persia in constructing Persian identity. Jane Grogan’s article on the popularity of Cyrus in early modern England is the first of its kind in recent scholarship on Persia (Grogan, 2008). Additionally, a second piece gives an over-view of the diverse strands of Persian representation in early modern England and thus comes closer to the objectives of this thesis (Grogan, 2010).

Scholars from Iran or of Iranian origin settled in the West have also shown interest in issues related to the representation of Persia in English literature. A few examples are unpublished PhD theses by Mohammad Taghi Nezam-Mafi, Vali Erfanian T Baghal-Kar and Hossein Pirnajmuddin (Nezam-Mafi, 1999; Baghal-Kar, 1981; Pirnajmuddin, 2002). However, all three theses cover at least three centuries of Persian representation and fail to produce a sustained analysis of any one period and the different factors that influenced the creation of a certain image.

This thesis has immensely benefited from most of the above work but is different from the whole corpus in certain crucial respects. For the first time, this project takes into account the gradually increasing knowledge about Persia and Ottoman-Safavid enmity in the sixteenth century that eventually culminated into the voyage of the Sherley brothers to Persia. Secondly, it focuses on images of classical Persia in Elizabethan drama, which are a central element to the complexity of the Persian image in early modern England. Thirdly, John Thomas Minadoi's *Historie of Warres between the Turkes and the Persians* translated into English by Abraham Hartwell in 1595 is one of the most important texts concerning early modern Europe's fascination with the Ottoman-Safavid wars. This thesis analyses this work in some detail in the context of Anglo-Persian relations. Finally, it studies Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and William Percy's *Mahomet and His Heaven* as examples of plays that were highly influenced by the accounts of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry. To sum up, it can be said that this thesis accomplishes a project that is long over-due and offers a hitherto unseen perspective on England's relationship with the Muslim world.

The thesis is divided into five chapters and focuses predominantly on the Elizabethan period. Chapter One discusses the conception of classical (Achamaenid) Persia in early modern drama. It starts with an explanation of the popularity of ancient Persian history in the wake of humanist interest in the classics during the Renaissance which resulted in the translation and publication of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as well as Herodotus's *Histories* that contained material regarding Persia. It goes on to analyse plays such as Thomas Preston's *Cambises*, the anonymous *The Story of Kyng Daryus* and Richard Farrant's *The Wars of Cyrus*. *Cambises* is one early modern 'Persian' play that has received some critical attention, but the majority of studies take the Persian setting for granted without paying any attention to the 'Persian content' of the play. My approach to the play attempts to address this issue. *The Story of Kyng Daryus* derives its source material from the Old Testament. This is the most ignored of the Elizabethan 'Persian' plays on account of its simple plot and the assumed disconnectedness of the two stories that form the drama. The way I read the play explains the connection between the two parts of the drama and reveals how the early Elizabethan era was haunted by a fear of Catholicism and how an ancient Persian story from the Bible might offer a forum for Elizabethan sectarian polemic between Protestants and Catholics. Farrant's play is considered in the context of Sidney's use of Cyrus as one of



the most important classical heroes in his *Apology for Poetry* as well as the influence Xenophon exerted on Spenser and Milton. The classical aspect of the Persian image distinguishes Persia from the Ottoman Empire that lacked any classical association.

Chapter Two deals with the histories of Safavid Persia in early modern England. The predominant perception of Persia was that of an enemy of the Ottoman Turks. The chapter shows how the texts printed in England in the sixteenth century connected the new dynasty of the ‘Sophy’ with the White Sheep Turcoman Uzun Hasan as well as the Scythian conqueror Timur who all had a common anti-Ottoman element in their military campaigns. A reading of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* in terms of a Safavid Persian identity as successor of the Timurid Empire offers a new interpretation of *Tamburlaine* as a Persian king and especially of the Qur’an burning scene in the play that has intrigued many critics. Aside from the play, the chapter analyses some of the accounts of Safavid-Ottoman wars in order to show how a discourse of enmity between the Ottomans and Safavids was crystallizing in the 1580s.

Chapter Three is a study of John Thomas Minadoi’s *Historie of Warres betweene the Turkes and the Persians* and shows a rising awareness of the nature of the differences between the two Muslim Empires. Minadoi gives a lengthy and detailed factual account of the sectarian differences between the Safavids and the Ottomans and this chapter explores the contours of this understanding in early modern Europe in the context of Catholic-Protestant division. An attempt has also been made to identify who from among the Sunnis and the Sh’ias was thought to be closer to either the Catholics or the Protestants in other early modern texts. This chapter culminates in a brief analysis of the Mahomet and Haly episode at the end of William Percy’s *Mahomet and His Heaven* which has a very explicit comparison of Muslim and Christian sectarian division.

While the chapters that discuss the differences between the Ottomans and the Persians suggest the erasure of Persian Muslim identity in order to highlight their difference with the Ottomans, Chapter Four brings into focus the new Persian identity of the romance texts of the 1580s and 1590s which is deeply Islamic, and thus anti-Christian. The ambivalence towards this Muslim Persian identity is featured in other texts that differentiate them from the Ottoman Turks but in the texts discussed in this chapter, all difference between

Ottomans and Safavids is obliterated. Focussing on Munday's *Zelauto*, Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London*, the chapter explores the representational strategies of the authors and their inspiration for conflating the Ottomans and the Persians rather than differentiating between them.

Chapter Five concentrates on images of Persia in early modern England that appeared in the wake of 'travels' and 'travailes' of Englishmen in Persia: in particular Anthony Jenkinson and the Sherley Brothers. Jenkinson's account of his visit to Persia reveals an early English effort to exploit Ottoman-Safavid differences and the eventual failure of the project. While Jenkinson went to Persia with letters from the Queen, the Sherley Brothers went there without any official sanction and to disrupt English trade with the Ottomans. Both attempts are similar in the sense that both were motivated by a presumption of Persian anti-Ottomanism. The section concerning the Sherley Brothers specifically analyses the early Jacobean play on the brothers, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607), and shows how the play represents England's cumulative knowledge of Persia in the sixteenth century. The play contains anti-Ottoman, pro-Christian, anti-Christian as well as classical elements which reveal how playwrights in the early seventeenth century were exploiting various strands of the Persian image that forms the subject of this thesis. It thus offers an apt culmination, and is followed by a conclusion that considers the implications of this startling multiplicity.

## Chapter 1

### Images of Classical Persia in Early Modern England

The two major Muslim powers of the early modern period were the Ottoman Turks and the Safavid Persians. Apart from their hostility against each other on account of sectarian division into Sunni and Shi'a respectively, the greatest difference between the two concerned the origin of the two empires. While the origin of the Ottomans has been subject to great controversy, both among Renaissance humanists as well as modern scholars of the Ottoman Empire as has been shown by Meserve (2008), the Safavid Persians were instantly recognized as heir to the great ancient Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great. Additionally, Persia was mentioned in Daniel's *Revelation* as one of the four divinely sanctioned empires besides other references to Cyrus and Darius in other books of the Bible. These ancient associations of Persia, coupled with contemporary reports, resulted in a multi-faceted image of Persia in early modern England. This Persian image, as a result, considerably differs from the Ottoman image which is mainly derived from the Ottoman Empire's threatening expansion towards Christendom. The lack of Ottoman historical depth gives its representation a one sidedness that is predominantly negative, as the worst enemies of Christianity. Persia's case was different. Persia in early modern England had a complex, flexible and fluid identity which took many shapes and forms throughout the period. The humanist interest in classical heritage made the Persian connection with ancient civilizations obvious and it gave Safavid Persia a distinct image as inheritors of the classical Persian empire of Cyrus, Darius and Cambyses, a reputation that the Ottoman Turks never enjoyed in the early modern period.

Humanism was a key development of the Renaissance, yet it is a difficult term to define as it includes philosophical, educational and pedagogical dimensions. One of the authorities on the Renaissance and its impact on Europe, Paul Oskar Kristeller, considers it an educational movement that transformed the syllabi of European schools with an emphasis on grammar, rhetoric, poetics, history and moral philosophy. Kristeller defines humanism as

...that broad concern with the study and imitation of classical antiquity which was characteristic of the period and found its expression in scholarship and education and in many other areas, including arts and sciences (Kristeller, 1988, 168).

The ‘broad concern with....classical antiquity’ led Renaissance humanists to search for Greek and Roman texts and, once acquired, they launched a campaign of translating, annotating and teaching those texts. Mary Thomas Crane highlights this Renaissance interest in the classics of Ancient Greece and Rome as ‘two intertwined programmes: an interest in the recovery, restoration and translation of classical texts from Greek and Latin antiquity; and a focus on training in writing and speaking elegant Ciceronian Latin’ (Crane, 2003, 14).

Latin and Greek were two scholarly languages that were learned and taught in Renaissance Europe. Kristeller, in *Renaissance Thought*, is of the view that Greek texts and manuscripts were transported to Europe from Byzantine and Ottoman Turkey. This movement of Greek (and Arabic) texts from the East to Italy resulted in what Lisa Jardine calls “a continuous process of cross-cultural fertilization” that caused a “steadily increasing vogue for classical Greek learning in Italy during the early decades of the fifteenth century...” (Jardine, 1996, 59). Then these texts were translated into Latin by the Italian humanists for a wider readership. Kristeller highlights some of the important Greek works that were translated by the humanists:

...the body of newly translated material practically includes all of Greek poetry, historiography and oratory, much of Greek patristic theology, and of non-Aristotelian philosophy, and even some additional writings on the sciences of mathematics and medicine. The authors all or most of whose writings thus became known to Western readers include Homer and Sophocles, Herodotus and Thucydides, Xenophon, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Plutarch and Lucian, Epicurus, Sextus and Plotinus (Kristeller, 1961, 16-17).

The first important Persian dynasty that made its mark in the world was the Achaeminid dynasty. Some of the important monarchs in this dynasty were Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius. Cyrus ruled Persia between 559 and 530 BC and conquered the neighbouring states of Lydia, Media and Babylon. His successor Cambyses (530-522) expanded the Persian Empire to Egypt and Ethiopia and it was under Darius (522-486) that the Persians launched an expedition against the Greeks. It was the result of this Persian engagement with the Greeks in classical times that these encounters are even today imagined in terms of an East-

West binary opposition. In his book on Iranian history, Roman Ghrishman, for example, titles two chapters dealing with Perso-Greek wars as “East against West” and “West against East” (Ghrishman, 1954). The Greek interest in Persia is evident from accounts of Persia in the works of historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon and the playwright Aeschylus, whose play *The Persians* is the earliest Western drama portraying ‘Orientals’.

Greek and Roman civilizations were clearly the two main inspirations for Renaissance humanists. Nevertheless, as a result of the revival of classical learning, an interest in eastern classical civilizations is clearly visible, though not much attention has been paid to this side of the Renaissance except for a couple of articles by one scholar (Dennenfeldt 1952; Dennenfeldt 1959). Classical Persia, mainly in the period of Cyrus and Darius, received much attention in the early modern period and it was because of translations of Greek historical texts that early modern readers became aware of ancient Persia. Herodotus and Thucydides were two other important Greek historians whose works were translated into English in this period, but their work was eclipsed by the popularity of Xenophon. According to one scholar:

Their [Herodotus and Thucydides’] only rival in popularity might be the Athenian Xenophon, in two works that resulted from his own experience as an Athenian general leading an expedition in Persia shortly after the Peloponnesian War...His *Cyropaedia* describing the education and career of the Persian ruler Cyrus the Younger, was a popular text in the Renaissance...(France, 2000, 383).

Xenophon’s popularity is evident from the frequency with which his works were published in early modern England. The first was titled *Xenophons treatise of household*, published six times between 1532 and 1573. Xenophon’s work on Cyrus, titled *The bookes of Xenophon contayning the discipline, schole, and education of Cyrus the noble kyng of Persie. Translated out of Greeke into Englyshe, by M. Wyllyam Barkar* was published for the first time in England in 1552 (Xenophon, 1552). The same work was published with a slightly different title again in 1567. There were many other reprints of this work during the first half of the seventeenth century which testifies to Xenophon’s popularity and wide readership in early modern England (Xenophon, 1613; Xenophon, 1623; Xenophon, 1632; Xenophon, 1648; Xenophon, 1654).

Apart from the publication of his works in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, we find that Xenophon's influence extended into education, and his works were taught in English Grammar schools established under the influence of the humanist movement. M. L. Clarke, while discussing the syllabi of English Grammar schools in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, mentions Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as one of the historical texts taught in schools. According to him:

The usual first reading-book in Greek was the New Testament, but otherwise school education was exclusively pagan and followed roughly the same lines as Latin reading. The *Tabula* of Cebes and Aesop in Greek provided some simple morality and Lucian some lively dialogue. Demosthenes and Isocrates corresponded to Cicero, and Homer and Hesoid to Virgil, historical writing was hardly represented, for when we find Xenophon specified, we may assume that the *Cyropaedia* is intended (Clarke, 1959, 19).

Clarke also quotes one of Roger Ascham's letters written in 1542 or 1543, where he briefs a friend about the progress of Greek language in contemporary England. Ascham writes,

Sophocles and Euripides are now more familiar than Plautus was when you were here. Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon are more widely quoted and read than Livy then was, Demosthenes is as familiar as Cicero once was...(Clarke, 1959, 24-25).

These examples demonstrate quite how widely writings on classical Persia were known among England's educated public.

There were other Englishmen who were actively engaged in the revival of classical learning in England. One of these gentlemen was John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. He travelled to Italy in order to collect ancient texts and manuscripts. Roberto Weiss tells us how Tiptoft satiated his thirst for ancient texts to the extent of notoriety:

Tiptoft's Italian journeys enabled him to collect a considerable library, which impressed his Italian contemporaries to the point of charging him with spoliating their country of its book-wealth. Besides collecting manuscripts on a large scale, he also patronized those scholars with whom he came into contact, chiefly by encouraging them to prepare and dedicate to him Latin translations of Greek authors. Thus Ognibene da Lonigo dedicated to him a Latinized Xenophon, and Francesco Griffolini prepared at his request a Latin text of Lucian's *Calumnia* (Weiss, 1967, 116-17).

The references to Herodotus and more importantly to Xenophon in the above quotations, connected to Roger Ascham, John Cheke and John Tiptoft, reveal that some of the leading

figures of sixteenth century English humanism were instrumental in spreading knowledge about classical Persia through translating, printing and teaching. As a result, we see a large number of references to Persia and Persians in the first half of the sixteenth century and a steady flow of plays on classical Persian themes in the second half of the sixteenth as well as the seventeenth century.

Knowledge about classical Persia in early modern England led playwrights, many of whom would have studied this material, to exploit it for theatrical purposes. Between 1527 and 1641, Ladan Niayesh enumerates 26 plays “which include a Persian King or an allegorical representation of Persia” (Niayesh, 2008, 147). The plays included in the list represent both ancient as well as Safavid Persia and Niayesh does not distinguish between the two. Another list of Renaissance plays dealing with Persia produced by Linda McJannet in her article “Bringing in a Persian” gives two tables, one dealing with all the plays that have a Persian character and the other dealing with the plays with major Persian themes. Both the tables further divide the plays into three categories: plays with an ancient Persian setting, plays with Islamic Persian settings and plays with mixed or other settings. There were ten major Renaissance plays with an ancient Persian setting between 1527 and 1637: *Godly Queen Hester* (Anon. 1527); *Cambises* (Preston, 1561); *Darius* (Anon. 1565); *The Wars of Cyrus* (Farrant, 1576-80); *Darius* (Alexander, 1603); *Croesus* (Alexander, 1604); *Philotas* (Daniel, 1605); *The Alexandrian Tragedy* (Alexander, 1607); *The Prophetess* (Fletcher and Massinger, 1622) and *Algaura* (Suckling, 1637) (McJannet, 1999, 240). This list of plays clearly shows that early modern English playwrights found subject matter related to ancient Persia useful and relevant for their drama and also, significantly, shows the vogue for oriental characters in early modern England encompassing ancient Persian civilization.

Plays with ancient Persian themes were a direct result of the interest in Greek and Roman classics generated by Christian European humanism. But this does not mean that these writings were the only source for the dissemination of information about classical Persia. The Bible and biblical commentaries were another important source for information. References to Persia and her kings Cyrus and Darius are found in both Old and New Testaments in the Books of Ezra, Esther and Revelation and these references have been ably analysed by Yamauchi (1990). Moreover, the reference to the Magi who came to the

baby Jesus with gifts from the East in Matthew (2:1-12) has led many commentators to associate them with Persia and the story has persisted in Christian iconography as a symbol of Christian universalism and has been studied by a few scholars (Butler, 1948; Trexler, 1997; Rose, 2000). The references to Persia in the Bible show that ancient Persia was known in the Christian world right from the beginning of Christianity. The Bible was not a widely accessible text during the medieval period in Europe, but nevertheless, religious sermons and Church imagery acquainted medieval churchgoers with stories related to Persia. After the Lutheran Reformation, when it was translated into the vernacular, it became readily available to general reading class in Protestant Europe. This is a further source for the abundance of references to ancient Persia in early modern texts. One of these biblical stories was used in the anonymous play *The Story of Kyng Daryus* (1565), which is evidence of the impact of the Bible on early modern conceptions of Persia.

The diversity of sources regarding classical Persia in early modern England resulted in a variety of hybrid images. We do not find one dominant image of Persia that overshadows all others, and these images are a mix of positive and negative: the character depends on the source from which the information about classical Persia is derived. The images emanating from Herodotus' *Histories* are mostly negative, where ancient Persians are represented as cruel, despotic and tyrannous. The ultimate source for Thomas Preston's *Cambises* is Herodotus and this play represents the tyranny of Persian rulers. The works that take Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as their source represent a Persia where honour and chastity are the core values of the culture and where kings rule in a noble and gracious manner. The child rearing practices of Persians are also admired by those authors who have taken their cue from Xenophon. This image of Persia is represented in Richard Farrant's *The Wars of Cyrus* published in 1594. Those works that were primarily inspired by Biblical narrative represent Persia as one of the significant ancient empires, ruled by wise rulers, and this mainly derives from the discourse about the Magi, a term which literally means 'wise men.' The anonymous play *The Story of Kyng Daryus* (1565) is based on a Biblical story and represents Darius as a ruler who debates with the learned people of his time on what is the strongest force in the world: wine, women or king.



This division of Persian images in early modern drama and their sources might not be as clearly applied to the great number of other texts concerning Persia that were printed in early modern England. When we look at the chronicles, histories, religious books, and other texts in the tradition of *speculum principis*, we find that authors mix their sources and present a complex image of Persia. This results in a Persian ‘fluidity’ in early modern England and an unstable image emerges which shifts and develops with the introduction of new factors. The two major Persian paradigms in early modern England are classical and Islamic and these two images can possibly be divided into positive and negative. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the three prominent sixteenth century classical “Persian plays,” with a parallel study of the historical materials about Persia that preceded the publication of these plays.

Cambyes was Cyrus the Great’s son and he features in one sixteenth century history play as the main character. There is a long tradition of references to Cambyes in late medieval and early modern European works of art and such references concern two important events in his life: the stern punishment of the corrupt judge and the cruel murder of a courtier who tried to persuade him to show restraint in drinking. A prominent example of the Cambyes legend in European art is a late fifteenth century painting by Netherlandish painter Gerard David. The significance of the legend has been explicated in two recent articles (Miegroet, 1998; Velden, 1995). One early English instance of Cambyes’ drunkenness and subsequent tyranny is found in Chaucer’s ‘Summoner’s Tale’ (Benson, 2008). In the fifteenth century, we find the story of the corrupt judge and his punishment by Cambyes in Cessoli de Jacobus in which he calls “Cambyes kyng of perse” “a rightwys kyng” (Cessoli, 1474). This appears again in Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon* (1482), one of the earliest texts printed by Caxton (Higden, 1482, 122). In the Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis* (1390), John Gower narrates the story of the corrupt judge who was punished by Cambyes:

Another places also I rede  
Where that a Iuge hys owne dede  
Ne wil not venge his lawe broke  
The kyng it hath hym self y wroke  
The grete kyng whiche cambises  
Was ho e a juge lawles

He fonde and to remembraunce  
 He dyd vpon hym suche vengeaunce  
 Out of his skyn he was befloyne  
 Al quicke & in that wyse slayne  
 So that his skyn was shape al met  
 And nayled vpon the same set  
 Where that his sone shold sitte (Gower, 1483, 172).

Here Cambyses is not a Persian King but simply a 'grete kyng' which signifies the acceptance of the story as a universal phenomenon rather than specifically regional. The important thing is that Cambyses is not a drunkard tyrant, although Chaucer before him had mentioned only the story of his excessive drinking and cruelty and not his exemplary justice. Two years later, in 1485, the same story is repeated in another text titled *Here begynnys a schort [and] breue tabull on thes cronicles* by an anonymous author. According to this text: "This Cambises made a cursed Iuge to be fleid or hilt: a lyue &~ mad his son to sit on his fader skyn: that thurgh that drede he shold drid falshed and iuge rightwisli..." (Anon.iiij). Cambyses also appears in Boccaccio through John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, published in England in 1494 but this time it is not the story of corrupt judge that is narrated. Rather it is the story of Cambyses' brother whom he murders. Cambyses' brother is named as Mergus here, whereas in Preston and other sixteenth century authors, he is mentioned as Smirdis. The motive for the murder as given in the play and elsewhere is that Cambyses did not like his brother's criticism of his own cruelty. In this story Cambyses is said to have dreamt of his brother's plan to dethrone him and he hires a magician to kill Mergus his brother. While he was planning his brother's murder, God had planned to take his life:

And while cambices ordeyned this [...]eson  
 To sle mergus his owne brother dere  
 God from aboue cast his iyen doun  
 Him to punissh in full cruell manere  
 For he wexed wode who so list to lere  
 Caught a sharpe swerde and roué his thigh on twene  
 And sodenly he dyed for the peyne (Boccaccio, 1494, 51).

Boccaccio presents Cambyses as a Christian king, subject to a Christian God, avoiding any reference to Persia which again shows the significance of a Persian story that was exploited for Christian readers and listeners.

References to Cambyses continue in sixteenth century English texts and cruelty and commitment to justice go hand in hand in Cambyses' representation in these texts. Pope Pius II in a Latin work that was later translated into English by Alexander Barclay as *Here begynneth the ecloges of Alexa[n]der Barclay prest wherof the fyrst thre conteyneth the myseryes of courters [et] courtes of all prynces in generall* in 1530 alludes to Cambyses (Pius II, 1530, M 3v), but another text a couple of years later presents Cambyses' punishment of the judge as an exquisite example of upholding justice. Robert Fabyan in his *Fabyans cronycle newly prynted, wyth the cronycle, actes, and dedes done in the tyme of the reygne of the moste excellent prynce kynge Henry the vii.* (1533) narrates the story of the corrupt judge, telling his readers how he was flayed alive and his skin spread over a chair. He adds that on the wall facing the chair, the following verses were engraved so that judges would always remember the consequence of corruption and bribery. The judge is advised to:

Sytte vp ryght, & holde thyne handes from mede,  
Thyne erys from prayer, & fauoure from the chace /  
Let lawe be thy gyde, kepe iustyce in thy rede.  
Thy faders skynne, whych doth thy chayer sprede,  
Haue in thy mynde, fall not to lyke offence  
Leste for thy faute thou make lyke recompence (Fabyan, 1533, 119-20).

At the same time Fabyan's text was printed in England, we find a reference to the same story of Cambyses' justice presented through painted glass in Norwich's Guild Hall. The Guild Hall's windows were commissioned to be painted by Robert Ferroure who was mayor of Norwich in 1526 and 1536. According to David King, 'Ferroure's guild hall window presented a salutary message in 'the story of Corrupt Judge who was flayed alive for false judgment', with a descriptive text in English. It included the lines:

Lette all Men se, stedfast you be  
Justyce do ye, or else loke, ye fle' (King, 2004, 135).

This is a testimony to the popularity of the story in early modern England. The significance of Cambyses story to teach the necessity of justice is evident from the number of varied accounts to this story in early modern texts but painting the story on a glass makes it even more significant as those who could not read would have been able to understand the consequences of injustice. Moreover, the painted glass does not emphasize the need to be just for the judges only. It addresses “all men” and tells them “Justyce do ye” which reveals how the story was exploited and transformed in England to teach the moral tenet of justice.

Richard Taverner’s account of Cambyses in *The second booke of the Garden of wysedome* (1542) is the most important source for Thomas Preston’s *Cambyses*. The account begins with the narration of Sisanmes, the judge who was “corrupted with brybes and rewardes,” and starts with a disclaimer: “Cambyses Kynge of Persia was otherwyse a verye wycked and cruell tyraunte” (Taverner, 1542, 17). After telling about the “one good deed” of Cambyses, Taverner moves on to describe how Cambyses shot his advisor Prexasepes’ young son in the heart on being offended by his advice about drinking. He also kills his brother and forces “hys owne suster germayne” into marriage “whereas nature abhorreth from such kind of copulation” (21). On her resistance, she is also killed. After this, he moves towards the moral of the story and tells his readers, citing scripture, that “Blowdy men and wylde shall fynyshe halfe theyr days upon the erthe.” He narrates how Cambyses injured himself while mounting a horse and subsequently died. The lesson of the story is that “god woll not longe suffre tyrantes to reygne” (21).

Hugh Latimer also mentions the Cambyses story in the sermons that he preached before Edward VI. It is the first time that the English monarch is compared with the ancient Persian king: “Cambyses was a greate Emperoure suche another as oure mayster is...” (Latimer, 1549, J 1v). This account differs somewhat from the earlier ones as Latimer adds a “poor widow’s cry” against the judge to which Cambyses responded and punished the judge. About the skin of the judge spread over the judicial chair, Latimer opines: “Surely it was a goodly sygne, a goodly monument, the sygne of the Iudges skynne” and immediately following this he says: “...I praye God we maye once se the sygne of the skynne, in Englande” (Latimer, 1549, J 1r). Another ecclesiastical text titled *An ouersight, and deliberacion vpon the holy prophete Ionas...* (1550), again delivered as a sermon to the

King of England, evokes the same story in the wake of Biblical teachings for the establishment of justice and punishment of evildoers (Hooper, 1550, 68). The mention of Cambyses in the company of Prophets shows that good deeds of the ancients were considered worth following in early modern England, regardless of any Persian provenance.

There is a dual image of Cambyses in medieval and early modern English writings of the first half of the sixteenth century: Cambyses as a tyrant who murders ruthlessly and without any just cause and Cambyses who punished a corrupt judge by flaying him alive to uphold and establish justice. Cruelty and tyranny is common to both images of Cambyses and they are rehearsed again and again in English writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Nevertheless, he does not always emerge purely as an incarnation of tyranny and cruelty as there are instances where his cruelty to the judge is presented as a model for English justice and becomes a model for the English monarch. This duality results in an ambivalence that prevents Cambyses becoming a complete villain. Despite this, tyranny becomes a hallmark of ancient Persian identity in English writings about Cambyses and perhaps Persia more generally.

The early modern English discourse about Cambyses culminates in Thomas Preston's play, fully titled *A lamentable tragedy mixed ful of pleasant mirth, conteyning the life of Cambises king of Percia from the beginning of his kingdome vnto his death, his one good deed of execution, after that many wicked deeds and tirannous murders, committed by and through him, and last of all, his odious death by Gods iustice appointed*. The identity of Thomas Preston has been debated by earlier critics of the play (Armstrong, 1955), and there has been continuing discussion among scholars on dating the play to 1560-1 or 1569 as there is evidence to support both dates (Feldman, 1950). Those who support 1560-1 as the possible date base their argument on the fact that an entertainment titled "Huff Suff and Ruff" was played at Elizabeth's court in December 1560 or January 1561. This is considered a reference to the three clownish characters in *Cambises* called Huf, Ruf and Snuf. Those who favour the later date for the play do so because the play was registered for publication in the Stationer's Register in 1569. The second reason for this is derived from Bishop Bonner's mention in the play in the past tense from which it is concluded that, as

Bishop Bonner died in September 1569, the play must have been written earlier. If we take 1561 as the date of the play, it becomes the first Elizabethan play about ancient Persia. But if we accept 1569 as the date, then *Daryus* (1565) becomes the first play to feature an ancient Persian king. Of the three sixteenth century plays, *Daryus* is the only play whose date is not controversial, though its authorship is not known. Niayesh and McJannet have both favoured 1561 as *Cambises*' date and I tend to agree with them on the grounds that *Daryus* does not really deal with ancient Persia. Rather, it is an anti-Catholic interlude, the major element of which is a critique of Papists. It seems likely that by entitling the play *The Story of Kyng Daryus*, the anonymous playwright was capitalizing on *Cambises*' popularity by assigning an ancient Persian context to the play in the wake of *Cambises*'s success; Elizabethan audiences seem to have been looking forward to more ancient Persian plays.

Evidence of Preston's *Cambises*' popularity on the early modern stage is Shakespeare's reference to "King Cambises' vein" in *Henry IV Part II*, when Falstaff says: 'I must speak in passion, and I will do it in King Cambises' vein' (2.4.425). Shakespeare would not have mentioned King Cambises had Preston's play been minor or unknown, as Douglas Bush has pointed out (Bush, 1931, 144). Secondly, its popularity in modern times can be gauged from the fact that among all the plays that deal with ancient Persia, it is the most anthologized play over the centuries. Prior to Robert Carl Johnson's *A Critical Edition of Thomas Preston's Cambises*, six post-enlightenment editions of the play existed (Johnson, 1975). Despite this wide circulation, and the existence of critical work, until recently the estimation of the play has been very low. This follows the above mentioned Shakespearean reference to the play where the style of 'King Cambises' is ridiculed and, following Shakespeare, generations of scholars have considered the play little more than a laughing stock (Tilley, 1909, 244-247). Eugene D Hill, in an excellent article, presents the strongest case to date for the play as a piece of art, and has summarised the positions taken by critics regarding the play (Hill, 1992, 404-5). His assessment of Thomas Preston is that he was a skilled artist and he wove the details of Cambyses' life that he gleaned from different sources in such a manner that one can interpret different parts of the play as a comment on either Henricain or Marian England. Hill's opinion about the play is worth noting: "The

play as I read it is a far more intelligent, far more alert document than the received scholarly account would lead one to expect” (430).

The form of the play is also an important issue and has generated debate amongst critics. It has been assigned forms from morality to history to comedy, tragedy and political drama. Robert Carl Johnson holds the following view about the form:

*Cambises* manifests the transition between morality play and the chronicles....Not history play, not morality play, not comedy, except in individual scenes, and surely not tragedy, this hybrid form bridges the chasm separating the true morality play of the earlier part of the century from the tragedies and history plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare (Johnson, 1975, 1).

Generically, the play is confused even in the title given by Thomas Preston, which states that it is “A lamentable tragedy mixed ful of pleasant mirth” which may lead the reader to think of the play as a tragi-comedy or as Johnson puts it “neither pure tragedy nor pure comedy” (11). Kent Cartwright discusses *Cambises* in his book *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century*, and argues that *Cambises* is a “political drama” demonstrating this by referring to scenes in the play which may have sounded contemporary for theatre-goers (Cartwright, 1999). David Hirst, on the other hand, considers the play as a bridge between medieval and early modern drama (Hirst, 1984). I suggest that *Cambises*, alongside other plays with major Persian characters or Persia as setting may be designated as “Persian plays” in the same way as early modern plays concerning ‘Turks’ have been labeled as ‘Turk Plays’ by Vitkus (2000). The scholarly tradition of analyzing *Cambises* has never considered it in conjunction with other plays that feature Persian monarchs as central characters. This offers a new context to these plays and demonstrates the significance of ancient Persia in the early modern English imagination.

*Cambises* is thus an important play in the corpus of Persian plays. Taken like this, the first and most important question to be asked is: what is so Persian in *Cambises*? The story of Cambyse’s degeneration into a cruel tyrant after doing a good deed had many other parallels in early modern texts in the tradition of the *Mirror for Magistrates* as has recently been demonstrated by one scholar (Winston, 2006). In the presence of many other possible models, “...why choose Cambises as the subject for an admonitory moral lesson presented

in dramatic form?” (Fishman, 1976, 201). Fishman is of the view that it was because of the source material found in Taverner’s *The Second Book of Wysdome* that Preston opted to dramatize Cambyses’ life. Nevertheless, he does not mention the material about ancient Persia as well as Cambyses already circulating in abundance and well suited for exploitation by playwrights.

Cambyses’ father Cyrus is presented as a highly noble prince in the play and Cambyses is compared to him in order to show the difference between son and father. The first mention of Cyrus is made in the Prologue: ‘In Percia there reignd a king, who Cirus hight by name: ‘Who did deserve as I doo read, the lasting blast of fame’ (Johnson, 1975, 15-16). This “lasting blast of fame” is not explained, but Cyrus attained this position in Christian histories as a result of his positive evaluation by the Greek historian Xenophon who laid its foundation. There are recurrent references to Cyrus in early modern texts which represent him as a great king, and despite the paganism of ancient Persian religion, many of these texts go to the extent of presenting him as a monotheistic believer in God. Further reference to Cyrus is found in the beginning of the first scene where Cambyses is addressing his “Counsaile grave.” He tells his advisors that he is a legitimate successor of his father Cyrus who has been vanquished by death. He means to protect the renown of the throne that he has inherited. He expresses his objective in these lines:

You knowe, and often have heard tel my fathers worthy facts:  
A manly Marsis , hart he bare, appearing by his acts.  
And what? shall I to ground let fall my fathers golden praise?  
No, no, I meane for to attempt this same more large to raise  
(Johnson, 1975, 9-12, All subsequent references are from this edition.).

Here the image of Cyrus as a brave king who had a legacy of “golden praise” is being reinforced and Cambyses resolves not only to maintain that admiration, but further to add to that praise and admiration through his manly acts in the footsteps of his father.

We find another comparison between Cambyses and Cyrus in the fifth scene of the play when Praxaspes candidly informs the king that he should abandon his habit of excessive drinking. One of the lords that are present tries to defend Cambyses by comparing him to his father:

No, no, my Lord, it is not so! For this of prince they tel:



For vertuous prooffe and Princely facts, Cirus he doth excel.

By that his grace by conquest great, the Egiptians did convince,

Of him reporte abroad dooth passé, to be a worthy Prince.

(497-500)

Another courtier, a knight, immediately jumps in to defend the image of Cyrus by saying that:

In person of Cresus I answer make, we may not his grace compare

In whole respect for to be like, Cirus the kings father,

In so much your grace hath yet no childe as Cirus left behind:

Even you I meane, Cambises king, in whom I favour finde.

(501-504)

The statement of the knight clearly favours Cyrus against Cambyses. Cyrus and Cambyses represent two possible approaches to Persia in early modern English writings: Cyrus as positive and Cambyses as negative.

As I have suggested, the excessive drinking of Cambyses, his accuracy in shooting, and incestuous marriage are three motifs that become an essential part of Persian identity in Elizabethan English writings. Persian fondness for wine is generally connected with their wealth which results into pride and excess. One of the more important images of Persia in sixteenth century writings is that of a proud nation, which has vast quantities of gold and whose people live immersed in wine. John Jewel in his *An apologie or answere in defence of the Church of Englande* (1564), while discussing the Roman Bishops, characterizes their pride as “Persian-like” (Jewel, 1564, I 1r). The same author refers to the Pope and says that he sits in his chair “with his triple Crowne full of labelles, with sumptuous & Persianlike gorgiousnes” (Jewel, 1564, P 3v). Persian pride is also evoked in order to describe the character of some other nations and individuals. In Rudolf Gwalther’s *An hundred, threescore and fiftene homelyes or sermons, vppon the Actes of the Apostles, written by Saint Luke* (1572), the author blames his opponents as those “puffed up with the pride of the Persians” (Gwalther, 1572, 90). Some other references to Persians also assign

pride as an important feature of their personality. Sapor, the Sassanid emperor of Persia is said to be “the proude Persian Prince” (Lupton, 1581, 236) and another writer describes the Persian king as “Monarch proude of Asia all” (Ocland, 1585, B 2r). There are a few further instances where Persians are represented as obsessed with wine and other pleasures as T. P. in his *Of the knowvledge and conducte of warres two books* (1578) suggests. Ancient Persians were “sonke in delicate pleasures” and especially Darius who “drowned the Persian state in delicate life” (T. P., 1578, 8). This ‘delicacy’ of Persians was clearly closely linked with their drinking of wine, as we find in Philip of Macedon’s assessment of their way of life:

Phillip King of Macedon making warre uppon the Persians, understood, that they were a people which abounded in all manner of delicate wines, and other wastfull expences, whereupon he presently retired hys Armie, saying; It was needless to make war uppon them, who would shortly overthrow themselves (NL, 1598, 259).

Early modern texts also engage with the Persian skill in shooting and the care they took in nurturing this skill in their children. In *Cambises*, although it was a gruesome act of the king to murder Prexaspes’ son, it demonstrated Cambyses’ skill in shooting even when fully drunk. Does this episode suggest that drinking does not take away the senses of those who drink or that the king was extraordinarily well-trained in the art of shooting? We find a mention of Persian skill in shooting in Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The booke named the Gouernour* (1537), a work which was pivotal in developing a more positive image of the ancient Persians. It was a consequence of his interest in classical antiquity that he came across Xenophon and, taking cue from him, his Persians are noble and worthy of imitation. Elyot discusses in detail the measures taken by ancient Persians for the training of their children and mentions that: “...they lerned to shote, and to caste the darte or iauelyn. Whan they came to the aege of .xvii. yeres...” (Elyot, 1537, 64).

Roger Ascham, who played an important role in introducing classical learning to England in the sixteenth century, also commented on the Persian skill in shooting. Ascham points out Persian love for shooting as one skill among three that Persian children were taught in their teens. According to him, the Persians under Cyrus “had a lawe that their children shulde learne thre thinges, onelie from v. yeare oulde vnto .xx. to ryde an horse well, to shote well, to speake truthe alwayes & neuer lye” (Ascham, 1545, 14). As Roger Ascham

and Thomas Elyot were highly influential English humanists of the sixteenth century, it is possible to assume that their positive evaluation of ancient Persian traditions paved the way for later writers to present ancient Persians and specifically Cyrus in a positive manner.

Another play featuring an ancient Persian monarch and in some ways similar to Thomas Preston's *Cambises* is *The Story of Kyng Daryus* (1565). This play is anonymous and technically far less accomplished than Preston's play. Apart from the similarity of the Persian presence, both the plays are an example of the transition between interlude/morality and later historical plays. Both have a combination of historical characters and abstractions. This is evident from the featuring of "Vice" as one of the characters in these plays. This character is named Ambidexter in *Cambises* and Iniquity in *The Story of Kyng Daryus*. The difference between the treatment of these two characters is that Iniquity is clearly a Catholic character who is encountered by other abstractions in the play who try to persuade him to convert to the right church and not mislead the Christian masses. Ambidexter, on the other hand is a complex character, a "double dealer", whose statements are always fluid and can be understood in different and sometimes opposing ways.

*The Story of Kyng Daryus* has not received any attention in modern scholarship apart from some passing references in the general histories of drama and especially of interludes and Biblical drama. The reason for this might be its straightforward plot: Darryll Grantley calls the play "a Protestant morality" whose plot "has two strands...that minimally connect and there is little relationship either between the two sequences in which the king is involved" (Grantley, 2004, 183). James O Halliwell who edited the play and published it in 1860 expressed the view that the plot of the play is "extremely slight" and moreover "of little merit in any way as a composition" (Halliwell, 1860, Preface). But then what persuaded him to publish the play? He states that the only factor worthy of note is the anti-Papal invectives and notes that Queen Elizabeth is mentioned in the concluding prayer in the play. Otherwise "it is difficult to indicate any particulars worthy of note" (Halliwell, 1860, Preface). One recent comment about the play also concurs with the estimation of this nineteenth century editor:

*Kyng Daryus* is...thinner theatrically and stylistically. The biblical narrative, itself of limited dramatic value, is tucked into the final quarter of the interlude, and consists mainly of a slanging match between vices and virtues. It is not easy to see why the work was reprinted in 1577, by which time it must have seemed theatrically quite out of date. (O'Connell, 2000, 171).

Seen from the perspective of early modern drama and theatre broadly, the play might be of little value, but when considering the representation of Persian in the early modern imagination, it is quite significant as it shows the diversity of information about Persia that was available to early modern writers and readers.

King Darius is represented in the play as noble, virtuous and charitable. The Prolocutor introduces the king in this manner:

A certayne kynge (to you) we shall brynge in  
Whose name was Daryus (good and virtuous),  
Of nature also both loving and courteous (Halliwell, 1860, 1. All  
subsequent references to the play are from this edition.).

King Darius makes his first entry into the play when almost one third of the lines have already been spoken by Iniquity, Equity and Charity debating with each other about religion. When Darius enters the play, he reveals that he intends to prepare a great feast for a company of strangers. Prepartus and Agreeable assist Darius in preparing the feast and the guests arrive. The guests are Aethopia, Percya, Juda and Media. The way these characters greet King Darius is significant and creates a vision of the King as an imperial ruler of the four countries that appear in the garb of *dramatis personae*:

Aethop. God saue thy grace, iantle kynge;  
I do salute thee with much gretynge.  
Percya. Jesu preserue thee alwaye;  
And saue thee from thy enemies for euer and aye.  
Juda. O, sweet kynge! God saue thy grace,  
And send thee myght thy enemies to deface.  
Medya. God geue thee of thy aduerseries the victorie,  
And defend thee from all malice and enuye.  
(p.26)

These prayers for King Darius raise his profile in the eyes of the audience and a special point to note is the prayer uttered by Percya where it is not God but Jesu that is used by the

playwright signifying a Christian affinity with Persia. As in a number of earlier examples concerning Cambyeses, Darius, too, does not appear to be a follower of a pre-Christian religion. The Christian vocabulary used in the above quotation and in many other dialogues in the play creates an impression of Darius as a Christian king. The use of “God” rather than the multiple “gods” we find in *Cambyses*, also points towards this conclusion. This is because the part of the play narrating the story of Darius is based on Bible, and moreover, the mention of Persia and Persian kings in the New and Old Testaments makes it easy to connect Persian kings with Christianity. After the feast is finished we find the four characters once again repeating the prayers for the prosperity of Darius and his rule in terms of food and cattle. Before they leave, they jointly offer this prayer for Darius: “God saue thy grace, and send thee long lyfe;/And saue thee euer from all stryfe” (p.28). Darius reciprocates in the following manner: “God prosper your iourney, and send you good lucke;/And from your enemyes all you plucke” (p.28). These lines once again reinforce an image of Darius as a Christian monarch.

The second sequence of the play with King Darius is the one taken from the Old Testament. It is a riddle concerning who is the strongest: wine, woman or king. Three characters, Stipator Primus, Stipator Secundus and Zorobabell offer their responses to the king in written form. Their answers are read before the king and after listening to them, he asks the three of them to appear personally before him and explain their answers. Stipator Primus argues that wine is the strongest; Stipator Secundus goes for the king and Zorobabell suggests that woman is the strongest. Stipator Primus puts forward many arguments to prove why he has chosen wine as the strongest. About the person who drinks wine, he says:

He neuer hath memory of any thinge,  
It maketh it forget that he is a kynge.  
Nor that he doth gouerne or is in aucthorytye,  
And hath all thynges in his custodye.

(p.49)

Stipator Secundus then presents his arguments to show that king is the strongest of the three as he has authority and power over all the living and the non-living things in his dominion. Wars start and end at his call and all and sundry obey him. Thus, he is the strongest. Zorobabell, who is the only historical figure out of the three characters contesting to solve

the riddle, is remembered in the annals of history as the person who led the restoration of Jews from their captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem. He starts his discourse by first undermining the importance of wine and king and then establishing the superiority of woman over the two. The argument in favour of woman starts like this:

Hath not the woman borne the kynge,  
 And eke euery naturall thyng.  
 Hath not woman brought them vp all,  
 The vyneyards whereon wyne dooth fall;  
 They make garments for all creatures,  
 So that they be of humaine statures;  
 These cannot come without women,  
 Therefore the honour we must give to them.  
 (p.52)

Zorobabell continues his arguments to prove the power of woman over men in different capacities with particular emphasis on how a wife can force her husband to abandon his parents who provided him everything in life and brought him up:

Agayne, a man louth hys wife  
 Better then he dyd his parentes in his lyfe.  
 Many one in earth there is  
 That louth hys wife wonderous well ywisse;  
 Out theyr wyts also they do run,  
 And bond slaues for their wiues sake are become.  
 (p.53)

When he concludes his argument, the king declares his decision, and likes Zorobabell's answer the best:

Thou hast won of these thy vycorye,  
 Thou shall haue it rewarded to thee;  
 Aske what thou wylte, I will thee it giue,  
 And thou shalt be my friend as long as thou doest lieu.  
 (p.56)

Zorobabell requests Darius to fulfill one of the promises that he had made to him earlier and Darius grants his request. Darius is once again reminded of his commitment:

Jerusalem thou dydst promise  
 To buylde vp euery whyt  
 And all that therin were amysse  
 Restore agayne to it.

Send agayne the vessels all,  
 The iuels that were taken,  
 As well the great as eke the small  
 Which were cruelly shaken.

(pp. 56-7)

King Darius, by granting this request, emerges as a kind, noble and benevolent king who helped the Jews to be restored to Jerusalem and the building of God's temple there. There is not a single negative comment about either Darius or Persia which shows that the playwright conveyed a very positive and rather Christian image of Persia to early modern theatre goers, in stark contrast to the image of Persia portrayed in Cambyses' story and to the opprobrious depiction of Catholicism elsewhere in the play.

The last speech of the play is delivered by Constancy, and Queen Elizabeth is mentioned. It takes the form of a prayer:

Pray we to God, the Lord of myght  
 That he wold send down his cleare sight  
 To Queen Elizabeth and send her his worde,  
 That from her enemies she may be restored;  
 Let vs also pray that shee longe may lyue,  
 And that to her subjects true precepts she may gyue.

(p.59)

One way to look at the prayer is that the playwright is not happy with Queen Elizabeth's religious policy. She lacks the "clear sight" which would be possible to achieve if God sends her his word. The second part of the prayer that asks for her restoration from her enemies is also significant. If the Queen is in need of "clear sight" through God's own word, does it not mean that she is on the wrong path and requires divine guidance? Seen like this, the playwright seems critical. This becomes clearer if we notice the condemnation of flattery by Constancy in the preceding lines. It was only Zorobabell who "remayned in Constancye and was still wyse;/And for flattery, styll he dyd dyspyse" (p.58). The attribution of constancy to Zorobabell by Constancy shows that the two characters share a dislike for flattery. This is not the only condemnation of flattery in these lines. When Constancy starts his comment on the riddle of Esdras, he tells the audience: "...I think you have hard/How the flatteres were cruelly abhorred" (p.58). About the two who declared

wine and king as the strongest, Constancy says: “They went about by flattery, but yet did they mis” (p.58). The contrast between flattery and constancy also continues in this speech and when Constancy speaks the final prayer, the meaning behind her denunciation of flattery becomes evident.

The choice of the episode from Esdras is to highlight some contemporary courtly evils such as flattery and the concealment of truth. After proving that woman is the strongest, Zorobabell discredits his choice by saying “Women are become vnrighteous also,/ And no goodness at all can they do” (p.55). The lines might be ironically suggesting contemporary relevance. When Zorobabell has rejected his own choice, he replaces it with the truth as the strongest while he concludes his speech with these words: “Blessed be thou the God of trueth,/ Let thy trueth be in every mans mouth” (p.55-56). The prayer then presents the truth, which those who followed the trail of flattery were unable to express before the Queen. This is reinforced by the fact that after the prayer is ended, the playwright appends a song which echoes the words of Zorobabell regarding truth:

Let the trueth, let the trueth  
Be in every mans mouth,  
Both young and olde;  
Let him be bolde  
With trueth to holde,  
(p.59)

The discourse of “truth in every man’s mouth” following a prayer for the Queen and her councilors to be shown the right path and clear sight is revealing. The playwright is clearly using Persia to express his disapproval of the way things are being done in Queen Elizabeth’s court. What is probable is that he is not satisfied with the Queen’s attempts to root out Catholicism from England. The reference to her restoration from her enemies alludes to the specter of Catholicism looming large during the early years of her rule. The identification of Queen Elizabeth with the Jews is symptomatic of a long tradition of seeing post-Reformation and especially Elizabethan England as the new Israel. It was a significant phase in the development of a Protestant English identity in the early modern period which on the one hand, imagined the English as chosen by God, and on the other, as a nation surrounded by enemies.



The last lines of the prayer are spoken by Equity and Charity and we find a strong resemblance between a line from this speech and a line from the prayer at the end of *Cambises*. The lines by the two characters concern the role of the advisors of the Queen:

For the councellors also let vs pray,  
That in the true fayth drect them he may,  
And that also grace he wolde them geve  
To geve counsel wysely wile in earth they lieu.  
(Amen.) (p.59)

The Epilogue of *Cambises* also ends with a prayer for the Queen and contains almost the same sentiments for the councils of the Queen:

As duty bindes us for our noble Queene let us pray,  
And for her honorable Councel the trueth that they may use:  
To practice Justice and defend her grace eche day,  
To maintain Gods woord they may not refuse  
(Epilogus, 15-18)

These similarities reveal the significance and meaningfulness of ancient Persian themes for Elizabethan England. The dramatist's attraction to classical Persian material can be explained in terms of the vogue for such material in the sixteenth century. Apart from being interesting, spectacular, well known, and easy to be moulded into plays, it also helped the playwright circumvent controversy by removing the action of the plays to an apparently distant time and place.

However, what is the connection between the two sequences of *Kyng Daryus*? The major part of the play involves polemical debates between Iniquity, the representative of Catholicism, and other positive abstractions mainly Equity and Charity that represent Protestant faith. It is possible to argue that the prayer at the end of the play serves as the objective correlative for the two sequences of the play. The conflict between Inequity and Equity represents the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism in early Elizabethan England. Through the riddle of Esdras, it is shown that woman is the strongest which may suggest that Queen Elizabeth was capable of dealing with the Catholic threat but what she lacked was the right advice as her courtiers resorted to flattery like the two body-guards of Darius. It was only the third, Zorobabell—saviour of the early Jews—who had the courage

to speak the truth in the face of the king, telling him that it was neither wine nor king but woman. Constancy, the character in the play that recites the prayer, possibly represents the playwright, who like Zorobabell avoids flattery and speaks the truth by praying to God to guide the Queen by sending down his “clear sight” and “his worde” so that she is restored from her enemies and she is able to give true precepts to her subjects. Read this way, the play appears not as simplistic as it has been made to appear by earlier critics, and Persia becomes a crucial setting for the dramatization of English courtly politics.

As I have demonstrated, Cyrus is another ancient Persian monarch who is the focus of major interest in early modern English writings. Though he is represented in diverse ways, his dominant image is that of a noble and benevolent king. The most important testimony of this nobility is Richard Farrant’s play *The Wars of Cyrus* that was published in 1594 and is considered to have been written under the influence of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* (1587). Both the authorship and the date of the play has been a contentious issue among early modern scholars. The controversy on the date revolves round the issue of whether the play is pre-*Tamburlaine* or post-*Tamburlaine*. One view, mainly advocated by James Brawner in the introduction to the modern edition of the play in 1942, is that the play was composed by Richard Farrant and was performed by the Children of the Chapel Royal in late 1570s (Brawner, 1942). The contrary view is held by G. K. Hunter who strongly advocates the date of the play to be after *Tamburlaine*. He cites many examples from Marlowe’s plays to show that it was written under Marlovian influence. Otherwise, we would have to believe that Marlowe imitated the style of *The Wars of Cyrus* (Hunter, 1961; Ribner 1954). The issues of the dating and the authorship of the play have not been resolved and scholars prefer one or the other date and some still consider the play as anonymous (Niyaesh, 2008; McJannet, 1999). The play might have been performed earlier than *Tamburlaine* but after the thundering arrival of *Tamburlaine* on the London stage, it was deemed appropriate to publish *The Wars of Cyrus* to present an alternative model of a conqueror who is the epitome of virtue and nobility and is completely different from *Tamburlaine*.

The popularity of Cyrus in early modern England is owed to Xenophon, whose *Cyropaedia* (as I have demonstrated) was an important text in humanist circles during the Renaissance.

Xenophon was widely read in the 16<sup>th</sup> century England and it was not only the *Cyropaedia*, but also his *Treatise on Household* that was immensely popular. According to one scholar, “It was the principal source for ancient house-hold economy and widely available in printed Greek and Latin editions since the mid-sixteenth century” (Garberson, 2006, 113). Another work of Xenophon on horses was also known in Elizabethan England. Gabriel Harvey, while discussing the expertise of John Astley, a courtier and horseman, calls him “our English Xenophon.” It is suggested by Harold Wilson that Harvey named John Astley in this way, as a result of the title of his treatise on horsemanship published in 1584. The title runs: “THE/Art of Riding/set foorth in a/breefe treatise, with a due interpreta-/tion of certain place alleged out/ of Xenophon, and Gryson, verie/ expert and excellent/ Horssemen...” (Wilson, 1959). Xenophon appears to be a favourite of Machiavelli as well. According to W R Newell, in *The Prince and Discourses* he is discussed “more frequently than Plato, Aristotle and Cicero combined” (Newell, 1988, 108). Apart from Sir Philip Sidney whose familiarity with Xenophon and Cyrus is clearly evident from his references to Cyrus and is discussed below in some detail, we find that both Spenser and Milton were also fond of Xenophon. Spenser, in one of his letters to Sir Walter Raleigh, expresses his preference:

For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one in the exquisite depth of iudgement, formed a commun welth such as it should be, but the other in the person of Cyrus and the Persians fashioned a gournment such as might best be: So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule (Norbrook, 2002, 97).

The usefulness of the method adopted by Xenophon as enunciated in the quotation is closely related to Sidney’s idea of poetry being superior to philosophy and history. It seems that the idealized image of Cyrus in Xenophon was so convincing that Sidney and Spenser considered such idealized figures and Persia itself as an important tool for moralization and the imparting of virtue and a recent study has convincingly shown such uses of classical Persia in Spenser (Grogan, 2009).

Milton’s reference to Xenophon once again compares him with Plato and is an evidence of Xenophon’s popularity through the seventeenth century. In his prose work *An Apology*

*Against a Pamphlet Smectymnus* (1642), he shares with his readers the memory of the moments he spent in the company of some of the great classical authors. He says:

Thus from the laureate fraternity of Poets, riper years and the ceaseless round of study and reading led me to the shady spaces of philosophy, but chiefly to the divine volumes of Plato, and his equal Xenophon. Where if I should tell ye what I learnt of chastity and love, I meane that which is truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy (Milton, 1953-82, 891).

Calling the works of Plato and Xenophon “divine volumes” and equating them both shows the respect Milton had for them and especially Xenophon and a number of critics have commented on this (Kristeller, 1980; Low, 1970; Gulden, 1998). The chastity, love and virtue learnt through these volumes might well be a reference to Panthea’s story that was taken up by Farrant as the basis of *The Wars of Cyrus*.

The representation of Cyrus reaches its climax in Sir Philip Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* in which Cyrus stands alongside other classical figures such as Achilles, Aeneas, Alexander and Orlando. Statistically, he is mentioned more than any other classical hero (13 times as compared to Achilles 4 times, Alexander 6 times and Aeneas 10 times) and emerges as the most important model of a virtuous prince in the *Apology*. The first reference to Cyrus in the text describes him as “so right a prince” (Shepherd, 1973, 100) while a little later we find him mentioned again when Sidney is trying to explicate his theory about “Idea or fore-conceit” and he chooses the example of Cyrus to explain his theory. He believes that the imaginative rendering of Cyrus can produce many more Cyruses through the moralizing impact of the literary mode. Sidney declares Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* “an absolute heroical poem” and Xenophon as an artist “who did imitate so excellently as to give us effigiem justii imperii ‘the portraiture of a just empire,’ under the name of Cyrus (as Cicero saith of him)” (Shepherd, 1973, 103). Commenting on these lines, Geoffery Shepherd gives a quotation from Cicero which shows that the *Cyropaedia* was considered a fictional account of Cyrus right from the earliest times and Xenophon’s Cyrus was received as an idealized figure:

The Cyrus by Xenophon is not drawn according to historical accuracy but in the likeness of a model ruler, in whom the writer associates supreme dignity with outstanding friendliness. With good cause our great Scipio Africanus never let the

book out of his hand. In it nothing is omitted which has to do with the office of a loving and temperate ruler (Shepherd, 1973).

Sidney must have learnt about Xenophon while he was a young student. Xenophon, as has already been suggested, was a popular writer whose works were translated by the humanists and formed part of the school and university curricula in sixteenth century England. Elizabeth Story Donno sheds light on Sidney's readings in history during his student years:

As a student at Shrewsbury School under its famed headmaster, the ardent Protestant Thomas Ashton, and during his time at Oxford, Sidney was exposed...to the standard Roman, as well as some of the Greek authors, including of course the historians (Donno, 1987, 150).

Mary Ellen Lamb also draws attention towards the prominent place of *Cyropaedia* and the *Aeneid* in the Shrewsbury curriculum and she suggests that Cyrus embodied the ideals of discipline taught at grammar schools in 16<sup>th</sup> century England (Lamb, 1994, 511). Some instances of Sidney's interest in Xenophon are reflected in the recommended readings for his younger brother Robert Sidney and one of his friends, Edward Denny. He suggested "...Xenophon, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, Justin..." which demonstrates that he had already read these authors (Lamb, 1994, 511). Gavin Alexander points out an interesting coincidence in the lives of the Sidney brothers which reveals the importance of Cyrus for them:

In 1595, as *The Defence of Poesy* was being printed, with the Persian hero Cyrus one of its ideal images of virtue, Robert Sidney was offering his friends a deal on Dutch tapestry hangings depicting scenes from Cyrus' life, and Penelope Rich ordered some pieces (Alexander, 2006, 138).

This is a tantalizing indication of an Elizabethan Englishman's interest in visual images of Cyrus, which could have played a significant role in fashioning the theatrical Cyrus. Sidney's interest in Xenophon is also evident from one of the letters written to him by his Oxford tutor, Robert Dorsett on October 15, 1575. Dorsett informed Sidney of his efforts to find a Latin version of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* for Sidney's friend and Elizabethan playwright Fulke Greville as is shown in a recent article (Wilkies, 2006).

The references to Cyrus in Sidney raise questions about Cyrus' place in early modern thought. One obvious result of these references is that Cyrus emerges as one of the most virtuous princes in sixteenth century England. Sidney had a long list of heroes from classical Greek and Roman traditions but his decision to assign a central place to Cyrus reflects an understanding of Cyrus as an idealized prince ripe for literary recreation. Secondly, he might have chosen Cyrus as a result of his popularity among an early modern readership through Farrant's play as well as preceding allusions to him in a great variety of texts. There is no doubt that Farrant's play was performed at the same time as debates about the usefulness of theatre and poetry were raging in England and as a result Cyrus, as represented in the play (as discussed later), must have been fresh in the minds of Sidney's readers and it would have made his point quite forcefully. Another point to note here is that Sidney is replying to Gosson's attack on the stage. His choice of Cyrus as the virtuous prince is also a reference to theatre's potential for representing morally good characters and thus weakening the argument made by Gosson and his supporters.

*The Wars of Cyrus* represents Cyrus the Great in a positive light throughout. There are a few negligible negative comments about him by one character but otherwise all the scenes in the play go on adding positive features to his characterization. His positive portrayal is aided by his words and actions as well as by others' comments about him, whether friend or foe. The play starts with the Persian army having defeated the Assyrians, and distributing the valuables that they have gained from the enemy. In his first speech, Cyrus celebrates the courage of his allies and mocks the cowardice of his enemies. He tells one of his commanders to distribute the spoils of war amongst his warriors while he visits "the aultars of the gods" for thanksgiving. Here is the first positive feature of Cyrus' personality. Araspes, who is assigned the distribution of the spoils, asks Cyrus: 'What portion of the golde shall we reserve/To be employed in your highnesse use?' (Brawner, 1942, I.i.45-46. All subsequent references to the play are from this edition.). And Cyrus replies: 'Araspas none for me, divide it all,/It pleaseth me to see my souldiers rich' (I.i.47-48). Cyrus, by refusing to get his share from the spoil, and by asserting that he prefers his soldiers over himself presents himself as a model military leader who cares for his soldiers and has no interest in worldly wealth.

The positive image of Cyrus is structurally affirmed in this play through contrast with the Assyrian Antiochus, who is represented as an evil and cruel king. Two stories, one real by Gobrias and the other feigned by Ctesiphon, let the audience compare the two rival kings and see the difference between them. Gobrias revolts against the Assyrian ruler and defects to the Persian camp. On having audience with Cyrus, he tells him the tragic story how his son was murdered by the Assyrian ruler out of jealousy. He declares himself the subject of Cyrus on the condition that the Persian ruler punishes the Assyrians:

I humblie thanke your royail maiestie,  
And here in presence of Persian lords,  
Adopt you heir of all my provinces,  
My holdes and castles, villages and towns,  
Conditionally that I may be revenged,  
On this archtyrant murderer of my sonne.  
Saving one daughter I have no child,  
And she endued with iewels, plate and golde  
Shall be bestowed as you my lord thinke best.  
(I.ii.257-265)

Cyrus' reply reflects his indifferent attitude towards women further reinforced in the next scene where Araspas tries to lure him to be interested in Panthea. He says:

Assirian I have captaines worthie here,  
She shall be matched as beseemes a princes borne.  
And foe revenge upon the Assirian king,  
We will girt in Babylon with our high host,  
Or either starve them with a lingering siege  
Or rip his bowels with our Persian swords.  
(I.ii.266-271)

By giving the priority to the issue of Gobrias' daughter, Cyrus tries to clarify that personally he is not interested in her. The indifference of Cyrus towards women is further elaborated in the next scene where Panthea, the captive queen of the king of Susa, is offered to him as the spoil of war. Araspas praises her beauty in great detail embellishing it with similes and metaphors. After listening to the whole discourse, Cyrus debates with him the futility of love, finally saying:

Men are in folly when they are in love,  
Urge me no more, I will not visit her.

For by the eie love slips into the heart,  
 Making men idle, negligent.  
 Nothing can more dishonor warriours,  
 Then to be conquered with a womans look.  
 (I.iii.336-341)

Cyrus makes it clear that love can affect the performance of soldiers and since he is leading his army against the enemy, he does not deem it appropriate to be entangled in love because his martial honour is paramount. This view is also expressed by Araspas when he falls in love with Panthea and is convinced that a loving soldier is unable to do justice to his profession:

Oh what a tyrant is this cruel love  
 That drinkes my blood and makes me pale and wan,  
 That sucks my spirit and makes me weake and faint,  
 That teares my heart and make me almost dead,  
 That revels in my braines and makes me mad!  
 (II.ii.411-415)

Araspas fails in his quest for Panthea despite using magic and finally Panthea complains to Cyrus of Araspas's immoral advances towards her:

That doting he hath sought my honors wreake.  
 A tedious siege (God knows) I have endured,  
 More hedious unto me then hastie armes,  
 While vilde Araspas with his lewde desires  
 Ceaselesse solicited my unlawfull bed[.]  
 (IV.i.1011-1015)

And she concludes her narration with the following declaration:

O Cyrus on thy sworde let Panthea die,  
 And so prevent the daunger of my shame.  
 (IV.i.1028-1029)

Cyrus is shocked by knowing this and assures Panthea that the culprit will be dealt with severely because

Such as I am, such must my followers be,  
 Else let them packe they shall not follow me.  
 The man that offered to dishonour you,  
 Shall be so thoroughly chastised for his fault,  
 As you shall rest sufficiently revenged,



## (IV.i.1039-1043)

This noble representation of Cyrus is further accentuated by the story Ctesiphon invents to convince him of his “just” cause to revolt against the Assyrian king. He comes on a secret mission to murder Cyrus but he is so impressed by him that he confesses before the king and asks for forgiveness. Antiochus is once again represented as a cruel tyrant and Ctesiphon calls himself “A wretched man undone by tyranny,/ And lawless rigour of a cruell prince” (II.iii.520-21). When Cyrus asks him to identify the prince, he mentions the new Assyrian king, who has “endless marks of villanie and blood” (II.iii.523-24). The cruelty and tyranny of Antiochus increases the attraction of Cyrus for the audience and he emerges as just and merciful king. Ctesiphon then goes on narrating his story: that he had a beautiful daughter who was considered the “flower of Babylon.” When the fame of her beauty reached the ear of the Assyrian prince, he lost the control of his passion. Consequently,

Unable to restrain his derne desire,  
 Attended by a band of armed men,  
 Invades my castle when I was at rest,  
 And bare my daughter with violate hands,  
 Unto his palace where she doth remaine,  
 As concubine allotted to his bed.

(II.iii.542-547)

Antiochus was “unable to restrain his ...desire” which in other words means that he was unlike Cyrus. Panthea’s beauty, as described by Araspas, makes her far more attractive than Ctesiphon’s daughter but Cyrus remains steadfast and does not fall into the trap of love, which demonstrates his self-control and personal discipline. Moreover, Cyrus is represented as the protector of chastity while Antiochus is represented as the violator of honour.

In a fit of remorse, Ctesiphon decides against murdering Cyrus. In one of the most important speeches in the play, he graphically draws a picture of the noble prince that is Cyrus:

How wise and gracious is this Persian king,  
 Who by his wisdom wins his follower’s hearts  
 Letting them march in armour wrought with gold,  
 And he girt in a coate of complete steele.  
 O Cyrus politique and liberall,

How honourable and magnanimous?  
 Rewarding virtue and revenging wrongs,  
 How full of temperance and fortitude,  
 Daring to menace fortune with his sworde,  
 Yet mercifull in all his victories.

(III.i.676-685)

Cyrus is wise and gracious and therefore loved by his followers. His army is rich and fully equipped to protect themselves against the enemy forces. Cyrus is politique, liberal, honourable, magnanimous, rewards virtue and punishes villainy. He is full of temperance, fortitude as well as mercy. These qualities turn Cyrus into a super-heroic personification of all that is good. Eugene M. Waith calls the qualities attributed to Cyrus as “chivalric virtues” which bring to mind the character of Tamburlaine, but nevertheless adds that “...the conspicuous difference between the two conquerors is that Cyrus is benevolent rather than terrifying” (Waith, 1971, 75). Ctesiphon repents his resolution to murder Cyrus and confesses this to him and moreover offers his services to kill Antiochus if he is freed. Cyrus apparently forgives him, and in a tactical move issues him a letter telling the whole story to Antiochus but telling Ctesiphon that he is offering a truce to Antiochus. When Ctesiphon reaches the Assyrian camp, Antiochus enquires about his mission and asks him to show him the sword “...staind and cankered with the gore,/That issued from that vaunting Persian heart” (IV.ii.1159-1160). Ctesiphon replies in an unexpected tone:

My Lord and king, I beare no bloodie sworde,  
 Nor staind with gore of Persians Cyrus heart,  
 A prince he is farre from delite in blood,  
 Mild, lovely, virtuous, wise and bountifull,  
 Able to reconcile his greatest foes  
 And make great princes of his meanest friends.

(IV.ii.1163-1168)

Though the message of these lines is apparent to the audience and will become even clearer a few lines later when the letter written by Cyrus is read, we find a few more qualities added to the profile of Cyrus the great.

Araspas, whose unwelcome moves towards Panthea have been reported to Cyrus, at one point hints at Cyrus’s fury and wrath. But his interlocutor contradicts him saying: ‘A prince he is most milde and mercifull/Soon mollified with vowes and penitence’ (IV.iii.1243-

1244). And a few lines later he again expresses the same idea: ‘And doubt not but of Cyrus you shall finde/A pitifull and passing gracious prince’ (IV.iii.1254-1255). Now it’s Cyrus’ turn to send his spy to the enemy camp. He pardons Araspas on the condition that he goes to the Assyrian camp feigning his quarrel with Cyrus on the issue of Panthea, gather intelligence about their military tactics and come back to the Persian side. This action proves Cyrus a very cunning military commander who is able to please both Panthea and Araspas at the same time.

The final tribute to Cyrus in the play is offered by Abradates, Panthea’s husband, who joins the Persian camp on his queen’s request. When he enters Cyrus’s tent, he declares that he does not need to be introduced to the Persian king because:

The vertues shining in his glorious looks,  
Say this is Cyrus, and in signe of love,  
Will Abradates thus salute his grace.  
(V.ii.1450-1452)

As a result of the noble treatment of Panthea, Abradates fights bravely against the Assyrians and lays down his life for a Persian victory. Before the war starts, we find the Persians and Abradates arguing over who should lead the Persian army. Abradates insists that he should be allowed to lead the army, but the Persians Histaspas and Araspas oppose him on the grounds that he should not be given the lead role as he is not a Persian:

Renowned Cyrus, honour me thus farre  
To have the leading of your vanguard forth  
Hist. Nay it belongs unto a Persian  
Ara. If to a Persian, it belongs to me.  
(V.ii.1539-1542)

The final decision is made by a lucky draw in which Abradates is favoured by fortune. This short episode again makes it clear how proud the Persians were perceived to be in early modern England.

The significant aspect of Cyrus’s characterization in the play is that he has no detractor, not even among his enemies. Despite the fact that the Assyrian king dispatches Ctesiphon to murder Cyrus, we don’t find any bitterness in him against Cyrus. As a result, the positive image of Cyrus is in a sense one-sided and linear, heaping good qualities on him, thus

making him almost too idealized. There are other dimensions to his character in this play. Throughout, Cyrus is shown as very calm and peaceful. He is hardly represented as hyper-masculine character, shedding blood and killing people like other conquerors and especially Marlowe's Tamburlaine. This suggests that this play might be an attempt to present an alternative paradigm of a dramatic hero who was not necessarily as immoral as other Machiavellian heroes of the time; a Persian response to a Marlovian over-reacher. That Xenophon's Cyrus was perceived as an anti-Machiavellian in 18<sup>th</sup> century England is shown by a recent article (Ahn, 2008) and the same is applicable to the early modern period.

The exemplary nature of Cyrus in sixteenth century English writings contradicts Anthony Pagden's *Worlds at War*, in which he reads early east-west relations in the light of Herodotus' *Histories*. He seems to endorse the idea of permanent and perpetual struggle between the Orient and Occident from the Battle of Salamis to September 11, 2001 and beyond and has tried to demonstrate the inherent structures in both parts of the world that keep them opposed and antagonistic. The scope of Pagden's work, obvious from his subtitle "The 2, 500-Year Struggle between East & West" is doomed to over-simplify matters in order to create a consistent interpretation of events. The same has happened with Edward Said's important work *Orientalism* (1978) whose limitation has been demonstrated by Nabil Matar and many others. The idea of "perpetual enmity" as put forward by Herodotus and taken up by Pagden to show the impossibility of rapprochement between East and the West loses its credence if we take Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* into account. It is not at all strange that there is not a single reference to the translation and use of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in Pagden's book. This is because Xenophon was not Herodotus through whom one could present the idea of "perpetual enmity." Cyrus, an eastern monarch, enters the early modern English imagination by way of Greek and Roman works-the two major civilizations that inspired the Renaissance- as a model king and the fact that he is not "European" or "western" presents no impediment. All the writers from Xenophon to Sidney who presented Cyrus as an example were not the victim of a twentieth century reductive paradigm that divided humanity into east and west. The exchange of ideas and objects between diverse civilizations in the history of humanity, as has been demonstrated by Lisa

Jardine and Jerry Brotton in the case of Renaissance Europe and the Ottoman Empire, makes a strong case for “perpetual interaction” rather than simply “perpetual enmity” (Jardine and Brotton, 2000).

## Chapter 2

### **The ‘sworne enemy to the Turk’: Differentiating ‘Turks’ and Persians in Elizabethan England**

The early modern Englishmen came to learn about various types of Muslims through travel, travel narratives, dramatic performances and a number of other historical and religious texts. This new knowledge of diversity in Islam included sectarian and ethnic denominations and it brought a new complexity to the image of Islam in early modern England. It revealed that Muslims had diverse opinions and beliefs which then engendered different and often contradictory policies by the ruling elite of the time. Ottoman Turks and Safavid Persians are the best example of this diversity of opinions and beliefs. They followed two different interpretations of Islam, Sunni and Shi’a respectively, and had serious military encounters during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The early modern Europeans took a keen interest in the wars between the Ottomans and the Safavids, since they shifted the theatre of war from Europe to Asia, thereby relieving pressure from the Christian neighbours of the Ottoman Empire.

The Safavid dynasty started with Shah Ismail Safavi who became the ruler of Persia in 1501. The rivalry of the Ottomans and the Persians is, however, traced to the third quarter of the fifteenth century when Uzun Hasan, lord of the White Sheep, had military encounters with the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. Uzun Hasan was successful in conquering vast lands in Persia and enjoyed diplomatic relations with the Venetians and even received military assistance from them in his struggle against the Turks as noted by Minorsky as well as Vaughan (Minorsky, 1940; Vaughan, 1954). Margaret Meserve has suggested that Uzun Hasan’s alliance with the Venetians in 1472 engendered great hopes of Ottoman defeat and he was presented as a great champion of the anti-Ottoman cause. According to her:

News of the alliance caused great excitement throughout Turkey, where Uzun Hasan was generally hailed as the King of Persia; humanists in Venice, Milan and Rome celebrated his bravery and valour (Meserve, 2003, 36).

In her recent book, Meserve has demonstrated the significance of Uzun Hasan for the Italian Renaissance humanists and how they represented him as a great benefactor of Christendom. In the words of Meserve, "...Uzun Hasan seemed to have appeared on the global stage to offer Christian Europe a providential rescue from the forces of barbarism and disbelief" (Meserve, 2008, 226).

The mention of wars between Uzun Hasan's forces and the Ottomans led to a sense of the enmity between the Persians and the Ottomans developing in England. It is in this context that William Thomas, Clerk of the Council of Edward VI, in his *The Historie of Italy* (1549) mentioned the league between the Persians and the Venetians. It was the Doge of Venice Nicolo Trono who entered in this "league with Usnucassan kyng of Persia (whose successor is now called Sophie) against the Turke" (Thomas, 1549, 109). The important point to note is the linking of "Usnucassan kyng of Persia" with the "Sophie" which recurs a number of times in sixteenth-century English texts. This identification between the two emerges out of their common cause against the Ottomans. A further evidence of English interest in Venetian-Persian relations is apparent from the fact that William Thomas translated the accounts of Venetian embassies led by Josafa Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini to Uzun Hasan into English which remained in manuscript until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was eventually published by Hakluyt Society in 1873 (Barbaro, 1873).

While, on the one hand, early modern English texts link Uzun Hasan with the Persian Sophy, on the other, a connection is made between Uzun Hasan and the historical Timur. Samuel Purchas, for example, in his work on world religions published in 1613, explains the relationship between Timur and the Persians. According to him, Shiekh Junaid, grandfather to Shah Ismail, "was holden in such reputation of holines by *Tamerlane*, that he came to visit him as a Saint; and at his request, set free 30000. slaues, which he had taken in the warres against *Baiazet*" (Purchas, 1613, 319). An anonymous tract that narrates the story of a war between the Ottomans and the Persians was published in 1579 and the author traces the origin of their conflict to the reign of Uzun Hasan in Persia in the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. He calls "D'Vsuncassan...successor of Tamerlane" (Anonymous, 1579, A. 2r). The pedigree of the Persian Sophy reaches back to Timur via Uzun Hasan and

the common feature of the three personalities in early modern European writings is their anti-Ottoman agenda.

These English authors might have learnt this lineage from the earlier accounts of Venetian relations with Uzun Hasan. As embassies were exchanged between the Venetians and Uzun Hasan, more and more information became available in Europe regarding Persia and her King. One such embassy was in Venice in 1464 and the account of this embassy is found in Dominico Malipiero's diary. Meserve quotes a piece from the diary that links Uzun Hasan with Timur and their shared anti-Ottomanism:

The Ambassador representing Uzun Hasan recalled how Tamberlan (whom he called the grand father of his lord) once captured Baisit, father of that Mehmed who regins today, and kept him in a cage under his dinner table, and led him about wherever he went, until he wretchedly ended his life (Meserve, 2008, 226).

This shows how the knowledge of the relationship between Timur and Uzun Hasan spread in Renaissance Europe. Their hatred of the Ottomans also played a role in bringing both together in early modern European thought.

Louis Leroy, a French author whose work was translated into English in 1594, also discusses the relationship between Uzun Hasan and Timur by stating that the Persian predecessor of the Safavid dynasty "Vsun-Cassanus" served under Tamburlaine (Leroy, 1594, 105). The exact relationship between Uzun Hasan and the first Safavid ruler Shah Ismail was, however, explained long ago by Antoine Geuffroy in his book on the history of the Ottoman Turks translated into English in 1542. After mentioning the wars between Ottoman Sultan Mehemet and the "kyнге of Persie called *Vsuncassan or Assembeg*" (Geuffroy, 1542, 117) and that the latter reigned in Persia in the 1470s, Geuffroy goes on to tell his readers how "Vsuncassan" was related to the Persian Sophy. According to this author, Shah Ismail's mother was the daughter of "Vsuncassan" (Geuffroy, 1542, 132) and he also gives details how Sultan Yaqub Beg, the successor of Uzun Hasan and his son murdered his brother in law, Sheikh Haider, (i.e Ismail's father) when Ismail was just eight years old and he was forced to take refuge with one of the influential disciples of his father and grand-father. This shows that the relationship between "Vsuncassan" and "Siach Ismail kyнге of Persye named Sophi" was known in Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century.



Uzun Hasan is mentioned in one of the most important texts of Elizabethan England: John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Foxe discusses the rise of the Ottoman Turks and writes about the Ottoman dynasty giving each ruler due space. He specifically highlights the suffering of Christians at the hands of the 'Turks'. While discussing the campaigns of Mahomet II, the 9<sup>th</sup> Emperor of the Turks, Foxe informs us of the Christian victory over the Ottomans in defending Belgrade. Here we find mention of an encounter between the 'Turks' and the Persians:

Mahumetes the Turke after this done in Europe, returned into Asia to warre, with Vsumcassanes a Persian, one of the Turkes stocke with who~ he had three battailes. The first was about the Riuer Euphrates, where the Turke lost 10. thousand men, and was put to the worse. In the second field likewise he was discomsited. The third battaile was at Arse~ga, where through the terrible noyse of the brasen peece, the Persian horses disturbed the ca~pe, and so was Vsumcassanues ouercome (Foxe, 1583, 743).

Foxe declares Usumcassan "a Persian, one of the Turk's stock" which conflates the two rivals in a curious way, showing how one can be a Persian and a Turk at the same time. The difference between the two here seems to be more of a political than an ethnic nature.

There are other late sixteenth century texts that repeat the story of Uzun Hasan and Ottoman Sultan Mehmed and offer an insight into power politics in Asia and Europe. For example, in Marin Barleti's history of the Albanian king Scanderbeg, we find a brief discussion of the Ottoman emperor Mehmed's war with the Persian ruler Uzun Hassan. The author clearly envisages the double pressure faced by the Ottomans from Europe as well as Persia and sees Mehmed's request to Scanderbeg for a truce as a consequence of the mounting pressure of an alliance between the emperor of Trebizond and Uzun Hassan against him. Hence, in this text we find an example of the interconnectedness of strategic positions taken by Persians and European Christians against the common enemy: the Ottoman Turk. After giving some details of encounters between the Turks and the Persians where both sides had to suffer losses, he comes to the key point of the Ottoman-Persian wars in his narrative:

Now come I to my matter, & I say, Mahomet being reduced to tearmes of some extremitie, and his affaires standing in an evill case by these cruell overthrowes which did in a manner shake his estate & Empire, might at this time have bene

beaten downe without ever being able to rise againe, if Italy and other Provinces of Christendome would have given ear & harkened to the continuall praier and monitions of the Hungarians, the Greekes, and the Albanians (Barleti, 1596, 388).

The quotation makes a strong case for Europeans to press home the benefits arising out of the wars between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians.

The significance of these references to a Persian king who is said to be successor of Timur is increased if we try to read such information in conjunction with Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine Parts I and II*. This play has received much attention in recent early modern Anglo-Islamic scholarship. Simon Shepherd, Jonathan Burton, Daniel Vitkus, Matthew Dimmock, Linda McJannet and John Michael Archer have all analysed *Tamburlaine* plays from different perspectives but they mainly consider the image of the ‘Turk’ (Shepherd 1986; Burton, 2005; Vitkus, 2003; Dimmock, 2005; McJannet, 2006; Archer, 2009). The representation of Persia is not the focus of any of the above works, though Matthew Dimmock suggests the resonance of Ottoman-Safavid conflict throughout the plays and sheds light on the significance of *Tamburlaine* as a king of Persia.

The first two acts of *Tamburlaine Part I* almost exclusively deal with Persia. The most conspicuous feature in these two acts is the weakness of the king of Persia. Mycetes is represented as a powerless king whose brother Cosroe is challenging his authority and eventually revolts against him. The first few lines of the play establish Persia as a weakling when Cosroe starts his speech with the following lines: “Unhappy Persia, that in former age/Hast been the seat of mighty conquerors” (Pt.1 I.i.6-7). Cosroe indulges in nostalgia when he mentions Africa and the bounds of Europe as the territories previously under Persian control. From that high position of being a “seat of mighty conquerors”, it has fallen to the condition that “Now Turks and Tartars shake their swords at thee/Meaning to mangle all thy provinces” (Pt.1 I.i.16-17). Further evidence of Persia’s impotence comes a little later when Cosroe says that he is disturbed “To see our neighbours that were wont to quake/And tremble at the Persian monarch’s name,/Now sits and laughs our regiment to scorn” (Pt.1 I.i.115-117).

Mycetes is represented as the major cause of the low condition in which Persia has found itself in the play. He is criticised by Cosroe when he tells him that Babylonians would

revolt against his government “Unless they have a wiser king than you” (I.i.92) and further explicates his stance by saying “...that all Asia/Lament to see the folly of their king” (Pt.1 I.i.95-96). The last lines show that Marlowe’s Persia encompassed the whole of Asia, or this is how the Persians conceived their empire. It is not only Cosroe who refers to the “folly” of Mycetes: Tamburlaine also holds the same views. Theridamas, the Persian commander appointed to encounter Tamburlaine’s forces by Mycetes, when he meets Tamburlaine face to face, is told: “In thee, thou valiant man of Persia,/I see the folly of thy emperor” (Pt.1 I.ii.166-67). The foolishness of Mycetes is exposed to its full extent in Act II, Scene IV, where he is shown hiding his crown for fear of losing it to his enemies. The beginning of his speech reveals his cowardice when he says “Accurst be he that first invented war!” (Pt.1 II.iv.1). While he is hiding his crown, Tamburlaine appears and engages with him:

Tamb. Are you the witty king of Persia?

Myc. Ay, marry, am I; have you any suit to me?

Tamb. I would entreat you to speak but three wise words.

(Pt.1 II.iv.23-25)

The irony of the word witty becomes clear when we find Cosroe later calling Mycetes “My witless brother” (Pt.1 II.v.42).

Both Tamburlaine and Cosroe hold Mycetes in contempt and ridicule because both aspire to replace him as the Emperor of Persia. Cosroe after getting rid of Mycetes is under the impression that Tamburlaine would submit to him as the “powerful” king of Persia, as is evident from his words to Meander: “Now send embassage to thy neighbour kings,/And let them know the Persian king is chang’d/From one that knew not what a king should do/To one that can command what ’longs thereto” (Pt.1 II.v.20-24).

While Mycetes is shown worrying about his own royal seat, Cosroe, on the other hand, for the short time that he becomes the Emperor of Persia, boasts of restoring its lost glory. When he attains the Persian crown he tells himself: “...Then, Cosroe, reign,/And govern Persia in her former pomp” (Pt.1 II.v.18-19). Cosroe is represented by Marlowe as an anti-Christian Persian king, quite true to the historical Persian ruler of the same name who attacked Jerusalem and removed the holy cross from there to Persia. One of the first signs

of his anti-Christianity appears in the lines where he laments the impotency of the Persian Empire and the loss of her resources as,

Men from the farthest equinoctial line  
Have swarm'd in troops into the Eastern India  
Lading their ships with gold and precious stones,  
And made their spoils from all our provinces.

(Pt.1 I.i.119-22)

Commenting on these lines, Jonathan Burton argues that by “men from the farthest equinoctial line” Cosroe means European Christians, or more specifically the Englishmen who had just started diverting their attention towards the East Indies trade (Burton, 2005, 71). Menaphon, one of the Persian dignitaries who was present at the occasion when Cosroe speaks the above quoted lines, advises him how they could reconquer their lost territories from the Christians. The path to recovering those lands passes through Greece. Menaphon tells Cosroe:

How easily may you, with a mighty host,  
Pass into Graecia, as did Cyrus once,  
And cause them to withdraw their forces home,  
Lest you subdue the pride of Christendom!

(Pt. 1 I.i. 129-132)

The reference to subduing “the pride of Christendom” shows that Cosroe is cast in an anti-Christian light. Robert Lerner, in an article on Joachim of Fiore points out that the Italian theologian considered Cosroe as an anti-Christ (Lerner, 1985, 563). A further reference to Christians in Cosroe’s speech confirms the above statement and clarifies what Cosroe means when he talks of “men from the farthest equinoctial line.” After becoming the King of Persia and perceiving that Tamburlaine has submitted to his rule, he tells him that he intends to go to “fair Persipolis” and “Then will we march to all those Indian mines/My witless brother to the Christians lost,/And ransom them with fame and usury” (II.v.41-43). The internal evidence from the play shows that Cosroe’s “men from farthest equinoctial line” were Christians and he was determined to subdue them and to recover Persia’s lost wealth and fame. Tamburlaine comes to the rescue of Christians here, as he will in the later part of the play, by killing Cosroe and becoming the Emperor of Persia himself.

The Persia of the first two acts of *Tamburlaine* Part I is fashioned on a mix of classical and early medieval elements and in this regard it resembles the conception of Persia that we

have explored in the previous chapter. Mycetes, Menaphon and Meander are not easy to locate historically and both Mycetes and Meander, according to Lisa Hopkins, have Greek names (Hopkins, 2008, 85). It is only through the character of Cosroe that classical Persia comes alive in the play. Thus, Persia of the first two acts does not reflect the contemporary conflict between the Ottomans and the Persians that Matthew Dimmock suggests in his *New Turkes* as there is hardly any reference to the Ottomans in the first two acts of the play (Dimmock, 2005, 137-61).

From the moment Tamburlaine wears the Persian crown and Bajazeth appears on the scene, the contemporary relevance of the play in terms of Ottoman-Safavid conflict becomes visible. Marlowe deliberately presents Tamburlaine as the King of Persia. The first recognition of his Persian identity comes from one of the Ottoman Bassas who is assigned the duty to go to Persia and offer Tamburlaine the peace agreement. The Bassa replies to Bajazeth thus:

Most great and puissant monarch of the earth  
Your basso will accomplish your behest,  
And shew your pleasure to the Persian,  
As fits the legate of the stately Turk.

(Pt. 1 III.i.41-44)

In the next line, the king of Argier identifies Tamburlaine as “the king of Persia” (Pt. 1 III.i.45). Agydas, one of the attendants of Zenocrate, calls Tamburlaine “king of Persia” (Pt. 1 III.ii.59) and Zenocrate also remembers him as “my love, the king of Persia” (Pt. 1 III.iii.132) and she identifies herself as Persian when she prays for Tamburlaine in his fight against the Ottomans:

Ye gods and powers that govern Persia,  
And made my lordly love her worthy king,  
Now strengthen him against the Turkish Bajazeth

(Pt. 1 III.iii.189-91)

Though Zenocrate is the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt, by becoming Persian, she has lost her Islamic identity and like Tamburlaine calls upon a host of other pagan deities. It is also worth mentioning here that the Persian characters in the first two acts of the play are never represented as Muslims. The Ottomans on the other hand are represented as followers of ‘Mahomet’ and most of the references to the Prophet Muhammad are found in the speeches of Ottoman characters. Zenocrate’s speech here is contrasted with the speech of Zabina

who speaks thus: ‘Now, Mahomet, solicit God himself,/And make him rain down murdering shot himself’ (Pt1III.iii.195-96).

Apart from these proclamations and signs of Tamburlaine’s Persian identity, there is yet another important link which has not been considered in Marlowe scholarship dealing with the religious connotations and interpretations of *Tamburlaine* plays. It is through the character of Usumcasane in both parts of the play that the Persian associations of Tamburlaine can be realized. Pedro Mexia’s account of Tamburlaine translated into English by Thomas Fortescue in 1571, one of the sources used by Marlowe, mentions Vsanacasan as an opponent of Ottoman Sultan Mahomet. After confirming the anti-Ottoman identity of his subject, he further adds:

And the Heires of this Vsancasam, as most men surmise, aduanced themselves, to the honour, and name of the first Sophi, whence now is deriued the empire of the Sophi, which liueth this daie, as sworne ennemie to the Turke (Ellis-Fermor, 1966, 297).

Tamburlaine, “Vsanacasan” and the “Sophi” all share the anti-Ottoman cause. But this was not the only source that Marlowe might have used to derive the name of Usumcasane. George Whetstone’s *The English Myrror* (1586), as J S Cunningham, the editor of the Revels edition of *Tamburlaine* argues, was one of the sources that Marlowe used to learn about the career of Tamburlaine (Cunningham, 1981, 10. All subsequent references to *The Tamburlaine* are from this edition of the play.). Whetstone’s account is also a rendition of Mexia’s account like the above quoted one in Fortescue. As a result, there is a close resemblance between the two, although Whetstone’s account tells us more about Persia under the Sophy than the former. Tamburlaine’s sons and their successors ruled the territories conquered by Tamburlaine “vntil the time of King Vsancasan.” Further, he goes on to link this “King Vsancasan” with the Persian Sophy. According to Whetstone, from “...the heyres of this *Vsancasan*, was chosen the first *Sophy*, who to this day (to the benefit of all christendom) maintaineth mortall wars against the great *Turk*” (Whetstone, 1586, 82-3). The parenthetical emphasis on “the benefit of all christendom” shows the significance of the emergence of an anti-Ottoman power in Asia for early modern Christians and any person who knew the career of Tamburlaine could see the reflection of him in the Persian Sophy. An alert early modern audience could have forged such connections and in the

workings of Tamburlaine could have read contemporary military encounters between the Persians and the Ottomans.

Marlowe does not only show some awareness of these sources that talk about “Vsanacasan” but he also displays knowledge that he must have gained from other sources. The name takes different forms in sixteenth and seventeenth century texts. One of the most popular forms is “Vsuncassan” and it is used in Antonie Geuffroy, Marin Barleti, Ralph Carr, and Samuel Purchas (Geuffroy, 1542; Barleti, 1596; Carr, 1600; Purchas 1613). Another form the name takes in other writings is split into two words or hyphenated. For example, Richard Knolles puts it as Vsun Cassan as well as Vsun-Cassanes (Knolles, 1603). The others who follow the same pattern are Vsun Cassan (Bodin, 1606), Vsun Chasan (Selden, 1614), Vsun Cassan (Avity, 1615) and Usun Cassanus in Platina—a possible source for Marlowe— (Platina, 1685). There is also a third way of transcribing the name in early modern sources and this is just giving the last name, omitting the first part. Jean de Serres and John Speed both use just Cassan rather than any other forms mentioned above (Serres, 1607; Speed 1611).

Marlowe does not use any of the forms that he might have found in his sources or the ones found in other contemporary or later works. He turns “Usun” or “Vsun” into “Usum” and similarly uses “Casane” for the second name rather than “Cassan” or “Chasan”. The closest parallel that we find in early modern texts is in Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* and it has already been shown by one scholar that Marlowe exploited some material from Foxe to fashion the Ottoman Sultan in Part I of his play (Brown, 1971). The form that Foxe uses is Usumcassan which explains Marlowe’s “Usum” rather than generally used “Usun” in early modern English texts. Moreover, what is remarkable about Marlowe’s use of this name is that he knew that “Usumcasane” is formed of two words: “Usum” and “Casane” and he uses both names interchangeably. In the famous lines in the first part of the play, Tamburlaine uses the full name:

Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?  
 Usumcasane and Theridamas  
 Is it not passing brave to be a king  
 And ride in triumph through Persipolis?  
 (Pt. 1 II.v.51-54)

Later in the same part, Tamburlaine uses the name Casane for his loyal friend and follower when he is about to crown him and others as his tributary king: ‘Theridamas, Techelles and Casane, here are the cates/you desire to finger, are they not?’ (Pt. 1 IV.iv.109-110)

Similarly, Techelles engages with Usumcasane and Casane in Act III when Agydas kills himself out of fear. When Agydas stabs himself, the following conversation takes place between Techelles and Usumcasane:

*Tech.* Usumcasane, see how right the man  
Hath hit the meaning of my lord the king!  
*Usum.* Faith, and, Techelles it was manly done;  
And, since he was so wise and honourable,  
Let us afford him now the bearing hence,  
And crave his triple worthy burial.  
*Tech.* Agreed, Casane; we will honour him.

(Pt. 1 III.iii.107-13)

Usumcasane has generated very little interest in Marlowe scholarship as he and his companions can’t shine in the company of Tamburlaine—a giant figure. Nevertheless, there is a need to assess Usumcasane’s role in the notorious Qur’an-burning scene and to connect it to possible associations between him and Persia. After destroying Babylon, Tamburlaine turns his attention towards destroying the spiritual basis of Islam. He addresses Usumcasane thus:

Now, Casane, where’s the Turkish Alcaron  
And all the heaps of superstitious books  
Found in the temples of that Mahomet  
Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt.

(Pt. 2 V.i.172-75)

Casane is shown to have collected “the Turkish Alcaron” and other “superstitious books” already as he promptly responds to Tamburlaine’s order by saying “Here they are, my Lord” (Pt. 2 V.i.176). After a few lines where Tamburlaine expresses his disappointment at the Prophet Muhammad’s powerlessness in safeguarding his “worshippers” and, contrasting him with the God whose scourge he is, he concludes: “So, Casane; fling them in the fire” (Pt. 2 V.i.185).

What I want to consider here is why Marlowe chose Casane as the person who helps Tamburlaine in the book-burning scene. Was it a deliberate decision or could he have assigned this role to anyone in the play? It is possible to contend that Marlowe deliberately



assigns this role to Usumcasane because he had come across information that emphasized the Persian enmity for the “Turkish Alcaron.” This can be demonstrated with reference to a work which Marlowe might have encountered while looking for material on Tamburlaine. Paolo Giovio whose book *A Short Treatise upon the Turkes Chronicles* was published in English in 1546 devotes a brief section to the religion of the Sophy. In this section, Giovio relates how the Persian Sophy conquered the parts of Persia under Usuncassanus’ rule and having done that, he invaded the Ottomans. One of the passages dealing with the Persians’ attitude towards Islam and Prophet Muhammad brings to mind the argument put forward by Tamburlaine in his Qur’an burning speech:

One of his [Sophy’s] precepts was this, that they shulde onely worship the living God, the whiche hath made this worlde, so wonderfull, whose visible handy woorke be these, the sunne, the mone, the stares. He called Mahomet in despite, a bondsman and...a vyle drudge. The bookes of his lawe wheresoever he founde theym, as false heresies and devilysh doctrine he brent them (Giovio, 1546, lxvi).

Contrasting Mahomet with God here is akin to Tamburlaine’s speech, where after saying “In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet” (Pt. 2 V.i.178), he expresses his belief in a God “...full of revenging wrath,/From whom the thunder and lightning breaks,/ Whose scourge I am and him will I obey” (Pt. 2 V.i.182-84). The idea that the Persian Sophy used to burn the books of Mahometan law seems to have been reenacted by a founder of the Sophies in *Tamburlaine*.

George Whetstone in *The English Mirror* also highlights the issue of Persian religion. He informs his readers that the empire of the Sophy had its origin in a person called Ismael who “named himself a Prophet & published an Alcoran contrary to Mahomets, by which means he assembled many people...” (Whetstone, 1586, 75). The publication of a Qur’an contrary to “Mahomets” by a Persian King reveals that the “Turkish Alcaron” is irrelevant for the Persians. It is in this context that Usumcasane’s role in flinging the Qur’an and other books into the fire may be seen. It is the Persian Usumcasane who becomes complicit in this act of book burning because the book is “Turkish.”

We do not find a single reference to “Sophy” in Marlowe’s whole dramatic corpus, which is a little puzzling in view of his knowledge of the Orient and especially Ottoman history. His sources, as shown above, mention “Usuncasan” as the founder of the Sophies. It is

difficult to believe that Marlowe did not know about recent developments in Persia. Though England had diverted her attention towards the Ottoman Turkey after not being successful in establishing the trade links between Persia and Europe via Moscow, Persia still loomed large in English plans to seek Ottoman help against the Spanish Armada. Did Marlowe think that presenting the Sophy as a character would turn the play into an overt comment on contemporary politics which might not serve English interests? In the 1580s, the English believed that the conflict between Persia and the Ottoman Turks was counterproductive to their objectives of involving Ottomans in their plans against Catholic Spain. Presenting contemporary Persians and Ottomans as enemies and hoping that they keep fighting was much more an issue for the Catholic Europe of 1580s that was immediately threatened by the Ottoman Turks.

Another possible explanation that is also evident in the two parts of the play concerns an image of Persia as weak, powerless and ruled by an effeminate ruler. While the conflict between “Persian” Tamburlaine and the Ottoman Sultan may reflect contemporary conflicts between the two Muslim rivals, the conflict between Cosroe and Mycetes may also reflect the politics of the Persian court in the 1570s and 1580s. Ladan Niayesh points out the similarities between this Mycetes-Cosroe conflict and the unrest in Persia between the death of Shah Tahmasp in 1581 and the accession of Shah Abbas to the Persian throne in 1587 (Niayesh, 2008, 140). From the mid-sixteenth century, English interest in Persia became increasingly evident and culminated in commercial voyages to Persia in the 1560s and 1570s. One image of Persia that developed out of the reports sent by Anthony Jenkinson and the later agents of the Muscovy Company was that of a weaker Persia. Shah Tahmasp is represented as an appeaser of the Ottoman Turks and displays anti-Christian behavior. It seems likely that Marlowe had some knowledge of the reports submitted by the Englishmen who visited Persia in these years and this has been suggested by another scholar who has mentioned the similarities between Hakluyt’s narratives and Marlowe’s Tamburlaine plays (Bartolovich, 1999, 40-41). The following lines clearly show that Marlowe is responding to Anthony Jenkinson’s voyage to Bukhara in 1558:

And Christian merchants, that with Russian stems  
Plough up huge furrows in the Caspian Sea,  
Shall vail to us as lords of all the lake.

(Pt. 1 I.ii.193-95)

Jenkinson, in the account of his journey to Bukhara informs his readers of the manner of their travel via Caspian Sea. He makes a special mention of the upholding of their Christian identity: “Note, that during the time of our Navigation, wee set up the redde crosse of S. George in our flagges, for honour of the Christians, which I suppose was never seene in the Caspian sea before” (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 334). If this makes any plausible case for Marlowe’s awareness of the reports of Persian voyages, it is possible to suggest that he developed an image of weaker Persia and this might have led him to ignore the Persian Sophy as one of the characters in *Tamburlaine* I and II.

Despite the absence of clear references to contemporary Ottoman-Safavid conflict, the overall vision of the two parts of the play depicting wars in Asia between either Scythians and Persians or Scythian-Persians and Ottomans addresses one of the popular Christian schemes to deal with the problem of the Ottoman Turk. The *Tamburlaine* plays demonstrate the significance of intra-Asian or intra-Muslim rivalries for the safety of Christendom and it was exactly the same interest that provoked a number of Elizabethan authors and translators to produce material that discussed the wars between the Ottomans and the Safavids. In this way Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* plays might have provided a powerful spectacle and context to understand the dynamics of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry.

The story of the Muslim conquest of Persia is repeated in many of the historical texts of the Elizabethan period and all such texts link Persia with Islam as well as ‘Turks’ in clear terms. Thomas Lanquet narrates this story in his work mentioned above where he says that when Persians were under the threat of attack from Muslim Arabs, the Persians requested the Turks to help and come to their rescue “...whiche beinge redye at theyr request entered Asia: and firste over ran the Halianes after the people of Colchis, Armeie, and the les Asia, and lastly vanquished the Sarasens: between whom peace was made on this condition, that the Turke should reigne in Persia and be called Sarasens.” The statement seems to suggest that the earliest Muslim rulers of Persia were ‘Turks’ who had embraced Islam after coming to terms with Arab Saracens. The coming of Islam to Persia is also discussed in a later text. In his *A Chronicle of all the Noble Emperours of the Romaines* published in 1571, Richard Rainolde discusses the early history of Islam under the Caliphs and attributes the addition of Persia to the Muslim empire by “Muhavias the 4. King after Mahomet” (Rainolde, 1571,

169). Rainolde mentions ‘Turks’ and Persians together, at one point showing the commonality of their beliefs and at another place showing their difference. In the first instance, ‘Turks’, Persians and Tartars are said to be shaving all parts of their bodies to achieve ritual purity (170). The most popular way of showing difference is through the wars between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians. According to Rainolde, “In the time of Mauritius, the Turkes fought with the Persians, but they were overthrowne of the Persians, and therefore theyr first invasion is not so famous as the second time” (177). From the above two quotations, it emerges that the discourse of shared beliefs between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians as well as their differences develops hand in hand with each other in early modern writings, especially of the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the features of Persian identity in early modern England is a preference for them over the Ottoman Turks as more sophisticated and well-mannered. For example, a book published in London in 1561 that deals with court manners for young men and women also discusses Ottoman and Persian court customs. Persians receive much more attention from the author, who intends

to speake somewhat also of the great Turkes: but much more particularly of the Sophyes king of Persia: for whom I understood by merchaunt men a long time trafficked in that countrey, the noble men there to be very full of prowess and well mannered and use in their conversation one with another, and in womens service, and in all their practicinges much courtesie and great soberietie...(Castiglione, 1561, B7v).

The quotation creates a positive image of Persia as opposed to negative images of ‘Turks’ always bent upon violence. Similarly, a text published in 1578 sets ‘Turks’ and Persian apart and gives favourable treatment to Persians. In the preface to the book, the writer elaborates the impact of climate and geography upon the inhabitants of a specific area. In his view, “...the Scytien, the Turke, and Tartaian [are] addicted to crueltie and the Persian to delicate life” (T. P., 1578, “The Preface”). This clearly promulgates a softer image of Persia as compared to the Ottomans.

Thomas Blundeville, similarly tries to create an impression of the superiority of Persians over the Ottomans by mentioning them after the Persians. In his 1594 work, while enumerating the “most mightie Potentates of Asia” he places Persia before ‘Turks’ and

after China (Blundeville, 1594, 256). Again in the same work under the heading “Which be the Great Princes of the World?” he says: “The most mightie Princes of the world are these five, that is, the King of China, otherwise called the great Cham 1. the King of Persia 2. The Great Turke 3. The Emperour of Aethiopia 4. The Emperor of Russia, otherwise called great Duke of Muscovia 5...” The Ottomans maintained a bigger empire than Persia in geographical as well as demographical and militaristic terms. But by placing Persia before the ‘Turks’, Blundeville tries to show the English reading public interested in foreign lands that a power more potent than the Ottomans had emerged in the world.

Giovanni Botero’s *The trauellers breuiat, or, An historicall description of the most famous kingdomes in the world* (1601) is an important work that deals with the history of Muslim lands. While talking about the Ottomans and Persians, the author is clearly biased towards the Persians. Following a brief history of the sectarian development in Islam right from the time of the Prophet Muhammad and some details of the rise of the Safavid dynasty in Persia, the author compares ‘Turks’ and Persians assigning the usual negative role to the ‘Turks’ and positive to the Persians. He also distinguishes Persians from all other Muslim empires. On the issue of succession in Muslim lands, he admires Persian rulers, albeit wrongly, in terms of their noble treatment of their brothers contrasting them with all the other Muslim empires where the rulers “either murder their brethren or put out their eies” (Botero, 1601, 151). Moreover, the author compares the Persian and Ottoman attitude toward nobility and is of the view that the Ottomans have not as many rich and noble people as are found in Persia. The comparison extends further to some other fields with the bottom-line that Persians are better than ‘Turks’.

The above comparison apart, when it comes to a description of the military might of the two, the Persians are represented far behind the Ottomans. The author gives a number of examples where the Ottomans defeated the Persians in wars and diminished their power. According to the author:

The Turke is a borderer all alongst the westerne coast of this whole empire, euen from the Caspian sea to the gulf of Saura, a tract almost of 15. degrees. He hath no enemie like dangerous to this prince, more to be feared, or of greater power, at whose hands in all conflicts (for the most part) he hath reaped nothing but losse and dishonor. *Mahumet* the second ouerthrew *Vssanchan*, and tooke from *Dauid* (his

vassall and confederate) the empire of *Trapezond*. *Selim* the first ouerthrew *Ismael* in Campania, and tooke from him Caramit, Orfa, Merdis and all the territorie which they call Alech. *Soliman* put *Tamas* to flight, and tooke from him Babylon and all Mesopotamia. In our daies *Amarath* woon whatsoeuer lieth betweene Derbent and Tauris... (Botero, 1601, 154).

The above quotation shows that the Ottomans' threat was not limited to Europe, but it also encompassed the other parts of the globe, though one was practically harmful for Christendom and the other ensured Ottoman involvement away from Europe.

*A Discourse of the Bloody and Cruel Battaille, of Late Loste by the Great Turke Sultan Selim* (1579) is an anonymous tract which discusses the battle of Chaldiran fought between the forces of the first Safavid ruler Shah Ismail and the Ottoman Sultan Selim in 1514, won by the Ottomans contrary to the title. It is one of many documents translated from French into English and in this way is a forerunner to Minadoi's *Historie of Warres* (1595). The significance of the treatise is evident from the date of its publication in 1579 as well as the anonymity of the text which may suggest the sensitive nature of the work in view of improving relations between England and Ottoman Porte. The English traders, by this time, had largely failed in their efforts to establish trade links with Persia and had diverted their attention towards the Ottoman Turks. The battle was fought more than half a century previously, which is not mentioned by the author/translator. Reviving the memory of a battle fought long time ago and reversing the facts suggests that the work was written and disseminated with some ulterior motive. Perhaps it points towards Ottoman weakness and asserts that the English policy of friendly relations with the Ottomans was not a step in the right direction. It can easily be assumed that works like these played a vital role in setting 'Turks' and Persians apart in the English imagination and led to the separate identity of Persians.

*A Discourse* starts with the mention of Turko-Persian hostility from the time of Uzun Hasan who is said to have become the ruler of Persia because of Timur. A positive and strong image of Persia is presented throughout the treatise with the mention that the Persians did not have good weapons and especially canons though they were more valiant than the 'Turks'. As a prelude to the narrative of war, the anonymous author first discusses its background. We are told that the 'Turks' were threatening the Persian territory with their rising power, therefore the Persians wanted to renew their pact with the Portuguese king as

well as the Aethopian ruler “fearing that the Turk would hinder him on the side, on the which he is the weakest” (*A Discourse*, 1579, A3r).

In order to counter the Ottoman threat, the Persian king built a strong army “of Persians and other nations, to the number of one hundred and threescore thousand, chosen men, very expert in armes” (*A Discourse*, 1579, A3r) and bid the army to move towards Servan near Mesopotamia. Knowing this, the Ottoman ruler Selim diverted forty thousand of his men towards Africa, to the site of the forthcoming battle. The Persian soldiers are praised by the author as very skillful and comparable to the best in Europe and Africa. At the beginning of the battle, the Ottomans suffer heavy losses to the account of one hundred sixty thousand soldiers and weapons of “inestimable” value were seized by the Persians. The Persians are also said to have lost around forty thousand men but the Persian loss is wholly attributed to the superior Ottoman cannons. As the Ottomans were forced to retreat in the first encounter with the Persian army, their commander Ochali Zaleth managed to gather together his army and launched a counter attack against the Persians. In this counter attack, the Turkish commander “had sett against them (the Persians) all the force of the Turkish Harqubushers, the which did great damage in the horsemen of the Persians...” but when the Persians received fresh aid from behind and the Sophy personally joined the battle, the game turned in Persia’s favour. The Sophy, with “the expertise, force and good experience of his horsemen, did breake all the sayde Turkish Harquebushers which were their strength, and then did put all their armie to flight...” (*A Discourse*, 1579, B1r).

However, a negative image of the Persians emerges after the victory. The town that the Ottomans had deserted did not intend to fight with the Persians and “they did put a certaine signe uppon the walles to parle” but the Persians did not negotiate with the inhabitants of the town and after a brief resistance they entered the town where “they used great cruelties, and taking none to mercie, they only preserved him, that was governour of the town, whom they keep cative” (*A Discourse*, 1579, B2v). The Ottomans suffered huge human and financial losses in this war. It was so great a loss that news spread in Venice that because of the defeat, the Ottoman Sultan died of sorrow. But he is also presented as a tyrant who ordered the beheading of the senior commanders of the Ottoman army as a punishment.

The author comprehends in clear terms the benefit of such wars between the Ottomans and the Persians. “And of such a victorie the Christians ought to render thanks to our good God the which doeth imparte and give unto us his graces, according as we neede, weakening and diminishing the meanes of the enemy of his holy faith & Christian religion...” (*A Discourse*, 1579, B2r-B3v). The author’s attitude towards Persians is ambivalent in this piece. Although he praises Persians as valiant and brave, in this quotation he does not differentiate between the two and it seems that the phrase “enemy of his holy faith & Christian religion” applies both to Ottomans and Persians.

The European benefit in Ottoman losses is also pronounced by the author and he is of the view that their losses in this war have left them unable to launch an offensive against Malta. In his view, “...in the meane while the Turkes, be so much weaker for to assail us on this side (as they had well thought to have come this Summer againe, to the Isle of Malta) having loste so great number of men in this battaile, as that of one hundred and threescore thousand remain deade upon the place...” (*A Discourse*, 1579, B3v). Moreover, the author hopes that the Persians will continue engaging the Ottomans, diverting them from Africa and Europe to the great advantage of Europe. About Sultan Selim, he says “....it is beleaved, that having to deale with suche an enemy as the Persians and his confederates, he shall have inough to doe for to revenge him against their forces, considering that the Persians do use the Canons as well as the Turkes, adding thereunto that the Persians are more stouter and couragious in warre” (*A Discourse*, 1579, B4v).

Before concluding the narrative, the author indulges in some wish-fulfilment regarding the end of the Ottoman Empire placing it in an apocalyptic vision of human history. He concludes the piece with a supplication to God for the unity of the Christian princes. “GOD graunt that the Christian Princes being wel joined together may recover the Orientall Empire, and therein plant the Holy Catholike faith, in the meane time, that this barbarous catife shalbe occupied in other causes. So be it” (*A Discourse*, 1579, B5v). The “recovery” of the Oriental Empire demonstrates the crusading spirit of the writer, and this supplication makes the author’s religious affiliation clear. Most of the European territories threatened by the Ottoman Turks owed their loyalty to the Catholic Church. As a result, any Ottoman loss might be much more important for the Catholics than for the Protestants.



Another important document detailing the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians is Frauncis de Billerbeg's *Most Rare and Straunge Discourse of Amurath the Turkish Emperour that now is with the Warres Betweene Him and the Persians* (1582). One major difference in the treatment of Ottoman-Persian wars by Billerbeg and other late sixteenth century writers is that besides description of wars, he also provides details of diplomatic relations between the two rivals, their negotiations and failed attempts to reach an agreement to stop war and this distinguishes him from his contemporaries. Upon the death of Ismail II (r. 1576-1578), his brother Mohammed Khodabanda succeeded him as a ruler in Persia. According to Billerbeg, Khodabanda wished to avoid war with the Ottomans because of two reasons. First, "...being a lover of peace and tranquility" and secondly, because he was the one "...who knewe the strength of the Ottomans..." (Billerbeg, 1582, A4v). To this end, he sent his ambassador to the Ottoman emperor to negotiate the terms of peace. The negotiations failed and they fought a 'cruel battle,' both sides incurring heavy losses. Then there was another round of negotiations which failed again because of the high demands of the Ottomans who wanted the Persians to surrender the whole of Media to them, which the Persians could not accept. The Persians laid siege to Media and as a war tactic destroyed the whole city, burnt villages and towns including all the crops and other edibles. The Ottomans, who also had the support of Tartars, were highly distressed as their supply lines started drying up and they were forced to consider a truce with the Persians. Sinan Pasha, who was commanding the Ottoman army, reached a peace agreement with the Persians, but this time it was the Persians' turn to avenge. Billerbeg says that the Persians "made a great slaughter of the Turkes" (B1v). The Ottomans and the Persians are represented as equally crafty in this description and though the first impression of Persia—on reading that Khodabanda wanted peace because he knew the power of the Ottomans—is that of a weaker power, the conclusion of the narrative is a great slaughter of the Ottomans, which changes the earlier perception and turns the Persians into a worthy enemy.

As to the reason that led the Ottomans and Persians to fight against each other, it is interesting to note that the reason given by Billerbeg is absolutely different from that of his contemporaries. He does not assign the cause of war to the religious/theological differences between them as most of the writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries do. Nor does he ascribe it to separate national identities. According to Billerbeg,

The cause why these two people, of one living, of one superstition, do fight so cruelly, one with the other, is this (for so they report.) The Turkes accuse the Persians, that they have neglected to send Ambassadors and rewardes to Amurath, the lawful successor of Soliman and Selimus: according to that covenant and composition which was made before time between Soliman nus [sic] the Emperour of the Turkes and Thamus the king of the Persians (Billerbeg, 1582, B1v).

The cause of the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians is reduced to a diplomatic row between the two empires and no mention is made of the sectarian differences between the two, which is curious. Secondly, this brings to light the nature of relations between the Turks and the Persians which were characterized by intermittent periods of peace and war. The possibility of peaceful relations between the two could have diminished the reliability of Persians as a force undermining the Ottoman threat to Europe.

Interestingly enough, unlike other commentators on Ottoman-Persian relations in the early modern period, Billerbeg does not establish any link between the Ottoman-Persian wars and the Ottoman threat to Europe in the section discussed above. Nevertheless, immediately following the above section, there is a two page narrative titled “Of the Peace Concluded betweene King Philip and the Turk” (Billerbeg, 1582, B2v-r). The author tells us of the truce between the Spanish king and Ottoman ruler for a period of three years. The reason assigned to the agreement for peace is not the mutual “freendshippe” of Christians and Ottomans but that the latter were busy in wars with the Persians, and the Spaniards were busy in “civill warres.” We are earlier told that the Spanish envoy to the Great Turk had been struggling for three years to reach this sort of agreement but he eventually succeeded in achieving his target when the Ottomans had to deal with the Persians. This demonstrates the significance of the Persians in early modern east-west relations, where they had played an important role in determining the fate of Europe, menaced and terrorized by the Ottoman Turks.

The first and most important “English” view of the Ottomans and Persians comes from John Foxe in his *Actes and Monuments*. John Foxe is one of the most widely read sixteenth century English writers who shed light on the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians. He is the only writer among all those discussed here who claims that the Prophet Muhammad’s father was either a Syrian or a Persian (Foxe, 1583, 741). This is significant

in the sense that it indicates the Persians had an intimate relationship with the Prophet of Islam and strengthens the Muslim identity which Foxe gives them in later descriptions.

Foxe attributes the early Muslim conquests of Makkah and Damascus to coercion and force. Then he mentions the Muslims' encounter with the Persians. He says:

From thence he (Prophet Muhammad) turned his power against the Persians, with whom Cosroes, the king of Persia, encountered with a puissant army, overthrew the Saracens, and put Mahomet to flight. Of these Persians came the Turks, who afterwards joining with the Saracens, maintained them against the Christians (Foxe, 1583, 741).

This shows that the Turks and the Persians resisted Muslim attacks jointly but later on the Turks converted to Islam and turned against the Christians. The early history of Islam as discussed by Foxe is fairly accurate, and while discussing it, he tells us about Persia falling to Muslims. First of all, he mentions "Ebocara or Ebubacer" as the first successor of Prophet Muhammad and identifies him as the father-in-law of the Prophet. Then, he says, "After him followed Omar or Ahumer, who conquered a great part of Syria, and got Egypt. The third king of the Saracens, after Mahomet was Othman, then followed Hali, and after him Muhavia, who.....overcame the Persians, with their king Orimasda, and subdued that country to his law" (Foxe, 1583, 737).

According to Foxe, the first Ottoman dominion was Persia where they went to help the Persian king against the ruler of Babylon:

...the Saracen king who ruled in Persia, fighting against the Saracen of Babylon, sought aid of the Turks, to fight with him against the Sultan of Babylon: which Turks by little and little, surprised upon the Sultan of Persia, and, not long after, putting him out of place, usurped the kingdom of Persia; who afterwards went further, as ye shall hear, the Lord willing. And this is the first beginning of the Turks' dominion (Foxe, 1583, 737).

From the above quotation, it appears that the history of Ottoman-Persian hostility does not begin with the Safavids. It rather goes back in the annals of history. Secondly, the Muslim identity of the Persians is firmly established by calling their ruler "the Saracen king" and again "the Sultan of Persia." This is in contrast to other early modern writers who try to efface a Persian Muslim identity in order to show the difference between them and the Ottomans.

Foxe also writes about the peace agreement between the Venetians and the Ottomans in the reign of Bajazet II with conditions that were not very favourable for the Ottomans. Why they were forced to accept such a treaty like this is explained by the author:

Vnto this league the Turke did the rather condescend, for that hee had to maintaine warre agaynst Ismaell Sophus in Asia, king of Persia: Which Sophus was stirred vp by Gods prouidence to warre w<sup>t</sup> thys Baiazetes, wher by the Christian Churches in Europe myght haue some breathing time, and freedome from the Turkes cruell tyranny & bloudshed. This Sophus was a valiant Turke, who with great power & victories had ouerrunne a great compasse of the East partes of Asia: then passing from Assiria into Media, and returning againe into Arinenia, hee made warre against the Albanians, Hiberians, and Scythians, and from thence comming vnto Asia Minor, encountred with Corcuthus Baiazetes sonne, and afterward co~ming to Bithynia, sought with Caragius Bassa, Baiazetes Captaine, whome he ouercame and put to flight, and afterward tooke him aliue and his wise prisoners (Foxe, 1583, 745).

The reference to “Sophus” as “a valiant Turke” illustrates the paradigm shift that was taking place in England regarding Persian identity, discussed in greater detail in chapter Four. Prior to the availability of eye-witness accounts written by Englishmen who went to Persia following Anthony Jenkinson’s journey in 1560s, a number of allusions to the Persian Sophy represent him as a new Prester John, a pseudo-Christian, stirred to fight against the Ottomans on behalf of Christian Europe. By the time Foxe was writing, this misconception was to a great extant removed and a better understanding of Persia as a Muslim polity had dawned.

After narrating the Persian victories in Asia against the Ottomans, Foxe highlights the significance of these wars and the role of God’s providence in initiating them:

Thus through the admirable example of Gods iustice and prouidence, were these turks kept occupied, & so came it to passe, y<sup>t</sup> these Barbarians being blasphemous against the sonne of God, shoulde thus horribly run one to the destruction of an other, being worthely punished w<sup>t</sup> mutuall slaughter and bloudshed for theyr impiety and blasphemy against Christ and his religion, wherby in the meane time some rest was geuen to the Christians (Foxe, 1583, 745).

Here again, Foxe does not discriminate between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians, like other writers from early modern England who attempted to make Persians closer to Christians and thus treat them sympathetically. For Foxe, both the ‘Turks’ and the Persians were

equally anti-Christian because both were “barbarians” and “blasphemous” against Jesus Christ. As a result, their wars were highly beneficial for the whole of Christendom.

Selim, the eleventh Ottoman ruler, is discussed next and the narration of his reign starts with the dispute of succession which prompts Selim to strangle his brothers and nephews. One of the brothers Achmat is also murdered but two of his sons escape Turkey, one to Persia and other to Egypt. As a result:

new occasion of warre grew vnto Zelymus, whereby hee was kept in Asia at home, to fight againste the Persians & Egyptians: so that throughe the Lordes prouidence, Christendom by that meanes was deliuered from great daunger and perill of the Turkes tirannie: For otherwise, the Turke was wholly mineded, wyth all his force and puissance, to inuade the Christians, being in doubt whether first to beginne wyth Rhodes, or whether to assault Pannoma, or els to set vpon Italy, being then at great discorde within it selfe: but thys cause occupied the Turks mind otherwise, and kept him at home. Suche was then the prouidence of the Lorde for the safegard of hys people (Foxe, 1583, 746).

John Foxe continues discussing Ottoman wars in Asia and presents an entangled web of alliances between diverse Muslim states against the Ottomans. The Ottoman ruler, Selim’s nephew, is said to have attacked Cappadocia, where the Persian Sophy joined the other side with his forces, “By reason whereof a great battell was fought betwixt the Persians and Zelymus in the fieldes of *Armenia maior*” (Foxe, 1583, 746). As Foxe considers both Ottomans and the Persians equally hateful and engaged in war because of Divine providence, he does not shy away from mentioning the Persian losses. In this war, Ismael Sophy got injured and left the battle-field resulting in Selim’s victory. Selim lost 30,000 of his soldiers in the war but succeeded in getting back the city of Tauris from the Persians.

Süleyman the Magnificent’s wars against Christians are given in great detail by Foxe. There are mentions of the losses of Ottomans and the Europeans in these encounters and a number of comments about Ottoman ways, most notably, the lack of keeping promises among them, which he repeats again and again while discussing the reign of Suleyman. The providence of the Lord as usual comes into action with the Persians’ preparation for war against the Ottomans. Ironically, Foxe moves quickly into the Ottoman-Persian theme leaving immediately behind the “Discord of Christian Princes” which would have equally been considered the “providence of God” by the Ottomans. In Foxe’s words

...beholde the gracious prouidence of our Lord and God toward vs, who seeing the misery & hauing pittie of hys poore Christians, sodeinly as with a snafle reined this raging beast, and brought him out of Europe into his owne country againe, by occasion of the Persians, who were then in great preparation of war agaynst the turkes, & had inuaded hys dominion. By reason wherof the turkes was kept there occupied, fighting with the Persians a long continuance (Foxe, 1583, 755).

Foxe also discusses different geographical locations owing allegiance to the Ottomans and enumerates prominent countries and cities under Ottoman rule. He leaves out India and Persia from the lists and discusses them separately, pointing out that according to Sebastian Munster's *Cosmography* Book V, Persia and India as far as Calcutta and Arabia were under the rule of "Turks and Sultans" (Foxe, 1583, 761). But Foxe does not agree with him and presents his views thus: "The which Persia, although it be vnder the Sophi, which is an enemy to the Turke, yet it is to be thought that he is a Sultane, one of the Turkyshe and Mahometish Religion" (Foxe, 1583, 761). This is the most crucial statement by Foxe in dispelling the image of Persia as an ally of Christendom. The author emphasizes the fact that in Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, the Christians should not believe that Persians are less Muslims than the Ottomans. At this point, Foxe complicates the terms used to differentiate Ottomans and Persians: Sultan and the Sophy. Each intermingles and conflates to become associated with the "Mahometan religion." The differentiation and conflation of Ottomans and Persians develops two parallel trajectories which also overlap at many points.

The two conceptions of Persia find its climax in Minadoi's book that narrates a history of wars between the 'Turks' and the Persians. The wars between the two necessitated the establishment of differences. One European writer who explained the nature of such differences was Nicolas Nicolay who made a voyage to Turkey and published his travel narrative in French. The narrative was later translated and published into English by T Washington the Younger in 1585. Nicolay provides some very useful information on the religion of the Persians and the Ottomans, showing some understanding of the differences between the two. Here Nicolay is quoted at some length:

Presently all the Persians are Mahometiste, like unto the Turks which two nations, notwithstanding that they both have one faith, yet are different in Ceremonies and opinions, for that Haly (which was cousin unto the...prophet Mahomet) or as som say his sonne in law having married his daughter Fatoma or Fatma) beeing the second calyphe would no more beare this name, but would be called a messenger of

God, as great or more then Mahomet whose institutions, lawes and ordinances, he chaunged and disannulled and made newe ones, whereby it came to pass that Mahometistes are devided, for those which followed Mahomet made a caliphe in Egypt, and the other dwelt in Persia with Haly, which, of these two people was holden in such reverence, that unto this day the Turkes doe call uppon him next after Mahomet, saying Allah Mehmet Haly, which signifieth god Mahomet Haly: and such hath been the division of the Mahometistes in their religion which unto this present continueth betwixt the Turkes and the Persians, which hath been the chiefe and beginning of all the warres which they have hadde one with another unto this present day (Nicolay, 1585, 116).

In this description, the difference between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians lies in the ambitiousness of Ali to become a leader more important than or as important as the Prophet Muhammad. This account further presents the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliph Ali as two rivals whose followers had their strongholds in Egypt and Persia respectively. From a factual stand point, however, this appears to be a pure fantasy containing little truth. Secondly, we are informed by the author of a formula generally used by the ‘Turks’: Alla Mehmet Haly. The order in which God, Muhammad and Ali are mentioned here should make part of the belief of Persians and not of ‘Turks’. Nicolay has not been able to establish the right link here. Finally, we find that Nicolay is very categorical in ascribing the cause of wars between the Ottomans and Persians to the differences over the interpretation of religious tenets.

The juxtaposition of the Prophet Muhammad and Ali as two opponents finds expression in some other early modern texts. Thomas Nash, in one of his works, likens his polemics with Gabriel Harvey to that of the “...*Turkes and Persians about Mahomet and Mortus Alli*, which should bee the greatest...” (Nash, 1596, D1r). Thomas Nash’s understanding of the difference between the Ottomans and Persians resembles Nicolay’s assertion that they differed about the stature of Muhammad and Ali. The most important example of this garbled understanding of the sectarian differences in Islam is portrayed in William Percy’s *Mahomet and Heaven*, where Ali and Muhammad are represented as two rival prophets.

A somewhat better understanding of sectarian differences started emerging in the same period, pioneered by Anthony Jenkinson and Geffery Duckett. This was further enhanced by John Foxe and later John Thomas Minadoi. They all show that the origin of difference in early Islam lies in the issue of the true successor to the Prophet Muhammad. There were

people who believed that Ali deserved to be the first Caliph after the Prophet while it actually happened after three others—Abu Bakr, Umar and Usman—had served as Caliphs that Ali got the chance to become Caliph.

‘Turks’ and Persians are said to be jealous of each other in George Whetstone’s *The English Mirror* (1586). They are placed alongside many other historical figures and regions that had a difficult relationship:

...there was never love, but envie between Cain and Abell, Isacke and Ismael, Loth and Abraham, Jacob and Esaus, Joseph and his brethern, the Kings of Juda and Israel and the Apostles, the Turkes and the Persians, the Romaines and the auncient Spartians, the Frenchmen and Englishmen...(Whetstone, 1586, 6).

By placing Ottomans and Persians in the middle of a number of other biblical and historically important figures, the envious relation of the two has been given a universal dimension and it seems that by this point their enmity was fully established in English writings. While Whetstone contextualizes the opposition of Turks and Persians with biblical figures, Louis Leroy, in a very interesting passage in his *Of the Interchangeable Course* (1594), notes the nations of the world that are at logger heads. According to him, “So are at this day opposed the Scots to the English; the English to the French; the French to the Italians; the Almaines to the Switzers; the Africans to the Spaniards; the Turkes to the Christians; the Persians to the Turkes; the Zagathaines to the Persians; being devided amongst themselves by colours redd and greene, and of that are called Caselbas...” (Leroy, 1594, 7). The narrative continues discussing rivalries in other parts of Asia and Africa. What interests us here is the order in which the rivalry among the Turks, Persians and Christians is placed which gives a clear message that both Christians and Persians have a common enemy in the Ottomans. But Leroy does not stop here and goes on to explain that the Persians are further divided into two other types: one favouring the red colour for their turbans while the other favouring green.

The use of colour codes to differentiate between ‘Turks’ and Persians might have helped playwrights to fashion their oriental characters. The word “Caselbas” as used by Leroy above refers to a community of twelver Shi’ites known as Kizilbash. They flourished in Ottoman Turkey and Persia in the early modern period and played an important role in the establishment of Safavid rule in Persia. They were called so because of the red colour of



their caps or turbans. A number of early modern works mention the “red heads” as an identity marker for Persians. One of the earliest references is found in Antonie Geoffroy’s *The order of the greate Turckes court* (1542). He states that the ‘Turks’ call the Persians “Caselbach” and then he explains “that is to saye redde heddes, because thei vse to were redde cappes or hates” (Geuffroy, 1542, CXVIII). Nicolas Nicolay also mentions the association of Persians with the red colour as against the Ottoman with the green. He calls the Persian sect as “Sophian” and further adds, “...in derision the Turks do cal them Kesulbach, which is to say, redde heads” (Nicolay, 1585, 108). Nicolay also mentions that it was forbidden for the Ottomans to cover the “dishonest parts of the body” with a green piece of cloth and the Persians thought so of the red. At another occasion, Nicolay distinguishes between the Ottomans and the Persians by the colour of their turbans. The Ottomans who claim to be descendents of the Prophet Muhammad wear a turban of green colour saying that they are following their Prophet’s way. But, on the other hand, “...contraire to the Turks, the Sophians, which are the Persians weare redde ones” (Nicolay, 1585, 109). Minadoi, whose book is discussed in some detail below, also identifies Persians as “Cheselbas” because of “...a certaine red marke which they carried on their heades by an ordinance that was instituted for the same by *Arduelle*, who was esteemed a very holy man” (Minadoi, 1595, 47). Minadoi has improved upon the earlier authors by referring to the role of “Arduelle”—Sheikh Haider, Shah Ismail’s father—in starting this tradition of red headgear and this is the reason that even today, the headgear is known as *Taj-e-Haider* (Haider’s Crown) (Savory, 1980, 19-20). Samuel Purchas gives a graphic description of the type of headgear the Persians used to wear in the early modern period. Purchas differs with Minadoi that the tradition of red headgear was initiated by Sheikh Haider. He rather goes with another of his sources, Joao De Barros, who believed that the tradition was started by Haider’s father Junaid. According to Purchas, Junaid “...ordained, that in the midst of their Turbant, (which they weare with many folds) there should arise a sharp top, in maner of a Pyrainis, diuided into twelue parts; (in remembrance of *Ali* his twelue sons) from the top to the bottome” (Purchas, 1613, 319). A number of other writers like Ralph Carr, Richard Hakluyt, Richard Knolles and Lazaro Soranzo refer to the preference of red colour among the Persians. It remains to be seen if the early modern stage representation of the Persians were influenced by this visible sign of difference from the Ottomans.

The chapter reveals an early modern English interest in the wars between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians. Marlowe’s choice of Tamburlaine as subject matter for the two plays clearly foregrounds the same role for his hero as the one played by contemporary Persian ruler known as “Sophy” in England to prevent the Ottoman Turks attacking Christendom. The celebration of Timur’s heroism in hugely popular and influential plays was inspired by his role in delaying the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks for half a century. Marlowe’s Tamburlaine is a Scythian turned Persian, who destroys Ottoman power with the help of other ‘Persians’, Usumcasane and Techelles, thereby foregrounding the contemporary Ottoman-Safavid conflict. The same interest is displayed in other contemporary pamphlets on Ottoman-Safavid wars. The over-all impact of such tropes was the establishment of a dominant image of Persia in early modern England that was favourable, of imagining Persians as saviours of Christendom through their engagement of the Ottomans in Asia. This is also highlighted in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* but Foxe, unlike other writers discussed in this chapter, clearly understood the similarities between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians and conflates the two as “barbarous” and “blasphemous.” This ambivalence towards Persia finds fuller expression in the romance texts of 1580s and 90s (discussed in Chapter Four) where Persia emerges as a staunchly Muslim and anti-Christian power similar to Ottoman Turks and Moors. The same ambivalence can also be observed in Minadoi’s *Historie of Warres* which shows that the boundaries between Safavids and Ottomans in the early modern period might be flexible as well as porous.

### Chapter 3

#### Complicating ‘Turks’ and the Persians:

##### John Thomas Minadoi’s *Historie of Warres betweene the Turkes and the Persians*

On 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1583, Pietro Bizarri wrote a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham (CSP Foreign, Elizabeth, 17, 133). He informed Walsingham that he was sending two copies of his “Persian history” along with the letter. The Persian history that Bizarri refers to in his letter was titled *Persicarum Rerum Historia* and was printed in Antwerp (Bizaro, 1583). One of the two copies sent to England was meant for the Queen while the other was for Walsingham himself. Bizarri apologizes to the Secretary that he had to send the copies of the book unbound because of the shortness of time. This book introduced John Thomas Minadoi to England.

Bizarri’s book was the first comprehensive Persian history that covered two thousand years of Persia—from ancient times to early modern. In order to make his book up to date, Bizarri appended a massive section of Minadoi’s then unpublished work on the Ottoman-Safavid wars (pages 513-644), and more specifically the sections that I am dealing with in this chapter. Minadoi’s book was fully published in Italian in 1587 and was translated into English and printed in 1595. But the fact that a partial Latin translation of Minadoi’s forthcoming book was available in England in 1583, and for the perusal of the Queen and her secretary makes the work all the more remarkable. This is a testimony to Minadoi’s respect in the early modern period. This also reveals the appetite for the knowledge of the wider world in early modern England.

The year 1595 assumes a highly important position in the history of English understanding of the differences between the Ottomans and the Persians. In this year, Abraham Hartwell translated John Thomas Minadoi’s *The Historie of Warres betweene the Turkes and the Persians*. There is no doubt that it was not a unique idea in 1595 as there were authors who had discussed the warring nature of this relationship in the 1560s, 70s and 80s. However, it was the first time that a whole volume was dedicated to the discussion of wars between the

two. This book must have made it abundantly clear to all readers the implications of these wars for a Europe that was under persistent threat from the Ottoman Turks.

John Thomas Minadoi (1545-1618) was an Italian physician who spent a few years in Aleppo and Constantinople and was attached to the Venetian Consulate. He went to Aleppo and served in the Venetian consulate there under the newly appointed Consul Teodoro Balbi and later his successor Giovanni Michiel (Siraisi, 2007, 247). While he was in the Orient he gained considerable knowledge of the affairs of Muslims in those parts and this knowledge formed the basis of his work dealing with the history of wars between the Ottomans and the Persians. The book was originally composed in Italian and was first published in Rome in 1587 (Minadoi, 1587). The revised second Italian edition was published twice in 1588 in Venice (Minadoi, 1588c) and Turin (Minadoi, 1588b). According to Siraisi, the first edition narrated the events till 1585 while the revised edition of 1588 takes the chronology of events to 1586. A Spanish translation of the book was also published in 1588 (Minadoi, 1588a) a German translation in 1592 (Minadoi, 1592), English in 1595 (Minadoi, 1595) and finally a Latin translation in 1601. The record of translations and publications across Europe reveals the immense popularity that Minadoi's book enjoyed in early modern Europe. The book has not only been important for early modern readers, but has been widely used by modern scholars, as Nancy Siraisi has shown (Siraisi, 2007, 350).

A cursory look at the availability of the work in British libraries shows the likely popularity of the work in Britain after its publication in Italy. For example, the John Ryland Library has a copy of the first edition published in 1587. Similarly, both 1588 and 1594 revised editions of the work are held in National Library of Scotland. The libraries of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Edinburgh as well as the British and Wellcome library hold a copy of the 1588 reprint. The Register of Preservation Surrogate also records a 1588 copy of the book. The University of Aberdeen library, along with Oxford University library and British library again have the 1594 reprint of the book. The 1594 Italian original of the work also figures in a number of North American libraries such as the Cleveland Public Library, Newberry library, Princeton library, Smithsonian Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Chicago and University of Toledo.

Abraham Hartwell's English translation, titled *The Historie of Warres* is also held by a number of libraries in Britain and North America which is further testimony to the popularity of the work. In Britain, it is held by university libraries in Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Birmingham, Leeds, University of London, multiple copies in Cambridge and Oxford, as well as Trinity College. In North America, this work is found in Boston Public, Folger Shakespeare, Huntington, Newberry, University of Illinois, Yale University, as well as Princeton, UCLA, Michigan and North Carolina libraries. Apart from the above libraries, the book was part of the personal collections of Charles Dean, Archbishop Marsh, P. A. Hanrott and Thomas Grenville.

Abraham Hartwell, the translator of Minadoi's work, was born in 1553/4 and died in 1607. The Dictionary of National Biography gives a brief sketch of his life as one of the representative members of the Society of Antiquaries. Apart from being an antiquary, he served in some other roles such as translator from Italian and French, public notary, ecclesiastical censor (Clegg, 2003, 54) and last but not the least as secretary to Archbishop Whitgift. He translated three Italian works into English and all three are dedicated to the Archbishop. One of the works that he translated was Duarte Lopez's *A Report of the Kingdome of Congo* published in 1597. It has been suggested that Hartwell was a close friend of Richard Hakluyt and it was on his persuasion that he translated Lopez's book into English (Mancall, 2007, 219-20).

While the original Italian work was dedicated to the Roman Catholic Pope Sixtus V (Siraisi, 2007, 252), Hartwell dedicates his English translation to the Pope's counterpart in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury: "To the most Gracious and Reverend Father in God, JOHN by the providence of God, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate and Metropolitane of all England, and one of the Lords of her Maisties most honorable Privie Council" (Minadoi, 1595, A2r). The dedication of the translation to the Archbishop shows the importance of the work from a religious perspective, since Christianity was considered to be under threat from the Ottoman Turks at the time of its publication. In the "Epistle Dedicatorie" Hartwell states that there were "sondry reasons" for undertaking the translation of Minadoi's book but he prefers to keep them secret "because they are such as concerne the matter of estate wherewithall I lift not to meddle for feare of burning my

fingers, I thought it good rather to conceal them, then in printe to publish them” (A2r-A3v). It seems that Hartwell’s hints concern the amiable relations between England under Elizabeth and the Ottoman Turks, as well as the commercial interests of the Levant Company in Turkey to whose interests this work might have been detrimental. But then he mustered his courage to publish the translation as a result of a strong recommendation of Minadoi and his book by Sir Moile Finche, “a right worshipfull knight in Kent” who expressed his views about the book in the presence of the Archbishop.

Hartwell goes on to explain his intention to add value to Minadoi’s work by including ancient as well as contemporary accounts of Persia, thereby highlighting how contemporary Persia “hath scarce a shaddow of the antique government, wherewith it was then ruled and governed” (A3r). It is evident from this that Hartwell had positive views of the classical Persian Empire and negative ones of contemporary Safavid Persia. This is in contrast to the positions taken by Italian writers of the early sixteenth century analyzed by Palmira Brummet and Margaret Meserve, who show that the image of the Safavid kings was generally very positive and Ismail was represented as a proto-Christian. Hartwell, however, has no faith in contemporary Persia and his view might have been influenced by Minadoi’s own as reflected in his work.

The Epistle also shows the translator’s dissatisfaction with the prophecies of the fall of the Ottoman Turks which never came true. He mentions one prophecy that set the year 1594 and 1595 as the years when the Ottoman Empire will “fall into the hands of the Christians.” In a somewhat bitter manner he says of the person who prophesied: “He shall pardon me, if I do not beleewe him, nor commend his credit to future posterity” (A4v). Then he laments the rising power of the ‘Turk’ despite all hopes and expectations of their downfall. “...the power of the Turkes,” he says,

growe so huge and infinite, and their enemies so divided and weakened, that unless God come downe as it were out of an Engine, to protect the Gospell of his Sonne Jesus Christ, and the Professors thereof, I feare greatly that the halfe Moone which now ruleth & raigneth over all the East, wil grow to the full, and breede such an Inundation as will utterly drowne al Christendome in the West (A4v-r).

Minadoi’s ‘Epistle to the Reader’ that follows Hartwell’s ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ is significant in terms of the author’s methodology in writing his history. He expresses a firm stance

regarding the truthfulness of the events he narrates: one of the first principles is the personal experience of the author:

...I have written this history with a full and sound resolution, never to decline from the truth, & not to suffer, that upon any occasion whatsoever, anything should be discoursed therein, but that which eyther I my selfe have seene or possibly could understand to be true (B2v).

It is not only in this letter to the reader that Minadoi emphasizes the importance of truth in his historical discourse, but throughout the book he repeatedly underscores his sensitivity regarding matters of truth and falsehood in narrating events. This emphasis on the importance of truth in the process of writing history reveals Minadoi's intellectual position and highlights the malpractices prevalent among contemporary historians who mixed the fabulous and the true and were hence careless in their profession. Though not a historian himself by profession, he takes a firm position against historians such as Paulus Jovius on certain counts. The other principles that he claims to have followed in writing the history are: to accept a piece of information only after confirming it from diverse sources; and as history concerns the two sides, to try to incorporate a version of both sides in order to avoid the danger of bias; and finally, to accept as his source "such men, as were esteemed no liers" (B2v).

Minadoi elaborates that there were mainly three important ways through which he was enabled to collect data for his book. First of all, he mentions Theodore Balbi and Giovanni Michele who were the Venetian Counsels in Syria, where he served as doctor. Secondly, he mentions another Venetian named Christoforo de Buoni, who was an interpreter to these Venetian diplomats. Thirdly, he is of the view that his profession of doctor helped him to glean a lot of useful information as a result of treating some important figures. He says that being a doctor, he did not cause any eyebrow to be raised against him and he "enter[ed] into their most secret & important devertisements." The duration of his stay there was "almost seven whole yeares together" (B2r)

*The Historie of Warres* contains nine books, a letter concerning the city of Tauris and a glossary of new names and terms mentioned in the book. The first book starts from the last years of the reign of Shah Tahmasp and ends just before the accession of Shah Abbas the Great in 1588. This book mainly covers the period of the Persian King Muhammad

Khodabanda and the Ottoman Sultans Selim II and Murad III. Nonetheless, the first book tells the readers the dynamics of succession in the Persian court after the will of Shah Tahmasp in favour of his younger son Ismail instead of the rightful heir, the eldest son, Muhammad Khudabanda. The role of a woman in the politics of succession reveals the powerful position of harem women in Persian court politics.

Out of nine, the two most important books concerning the present study are books one and two. The beginning of Book One is significant in setting up Minadoi's agenda regarding the Persians and the 'Turks'. For Minadoi, there is not much religious difference between the Ottomans and the Persians. They both adhere to the same religion and their differences are of a political nature. The exchange of embassies and envoys shows that their rivalry was not permanent and there were opportunities for dialogue and rapprochement. Thus, Minadoi devotes all his efforts to present an image of Persians as equally inimical to Christians as to their neighbours, the Ottoman Turks. The opening lines of Book One are revealing: "I write of sondry successes of the warre betweene Amurat king of Turkie, & Mahamet by surname called Codabanda king of Persia, both of them among the *Barbarians* being most mightie & most warlike Princes" (Minadoi, 1595, 1). Any inclination among early modern writers to differentiate between the 'Turks' and the Persians on account of religious divergence is totally absent. But this is not to suggest that he never mentions the devotional differences between the two, but he implies that the nature of those differences does not diminish or decrease the Islamic identity of the Persians.

Immediately after mentioning war between the Ottomans and the Persians, Minadoi connects this conflict with the fate of Christendom. "A warre not onely long & bloudie," he says, "but also very commodious to the Christian Common-wealth." He goes on to explain how it is beneficial for the Christians: "...for that it hath granted leisure to the Champions of Christ to refresh and encrease, being now much weakened by warres both Foreinne and Civill" (Minadoi, 1595, 1). Minadoi, like John Fox in his *Acts and Monuments*, assigns these wars to a divine plan rather than any human effort and is of the view that if the forces of both were united against the Christians, they would be in great trouble and turmoil.

Minadoi once again reiterates his view of the sameness of Ottomans and Persians when elaborating his objectives in writing the book. He says:



...I do verily persuade my selfe, that I shall breed great profite and delight to all nations Christian by the reading of this history, wherein they shall understand how mighty the forces are of these two enemies of the name of the Christ...(Minadoi, 1595, 2).

Both Ottomans and Persians are designated as “enemies of the name of the Christ” without any preferential treatment for the Persians. One of the ways of presenting Persian rulers in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century European writings was to present them as proto-Christians and rumours circulated in European capitals of the impending conversion of the Persian king to Christianity. Minadoi, however, resists presenting Persians in better terms than the ‘Turks’.

Ismail II was preferred by his father as the next ruler of Persia despite the fact that he was younger than his brother Muhammad Khodabanda. Minadoi informs readers that Ismail had learnt the “Turkish law” secretly. The reason for learning it secretly was that had it been known publically, it might have been enough evidence to disqualify him from the post of the king. Minadoi, however, clarifies that Ismail struggled hard to present himself as “an open enemy to the Turke” (Minadoi, 1595, 5). Here, the author underscores the hatred of the Persians for the ‘Turks’. Moreover, he is preparing us for a subsequent episode in the book where we are told of the “new religion” announced by Ismail.

Minadoi presents Ismail as a ruler not very much liked by the Persians on account of his tyranny and cruelty as well as his betrayal of the Persian religion which differed from that of their archrivals: the Ottomans. The miseries of the Persian masses are reported to be increased when,

certaine speeches were published and spread of the king, *That hee would change the Religion*, (if we may so call it), and assoone as he commanded openly, that whosoever desyred to live under his standard & and loved to obey his lawes, should detest the superstitious worships of Aly, the...false Prophet of the Persians & according to the impious custom of the Ottomans, observe and mayntaine the impure and wicked rites of Abubac, Osman and others, that were revered and honoured by the Turkes with a profane worship (Minadoi, 1595, 10).

The quotation above provides many insights into the early modern understanding of Ottoman-Persian differences. One idea that emerges is that the boundary between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians was porous and their religious identities were fluid. The conversion to ‘Turkish’ Islam from Persian was possible and it could happen at the highest

level. Furthermore, if there was any difference between the two, it relied on the differing attitude of the two towards the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Minadoi does not commit the error of showing Muhammad and Ali at odds as some other early modern writers do. It is interesting to note that the author does not bother to explain who Aly, Abubac and Osman were, which may show that he expected his readers to be knowledgeable enough about these personalities. This might reflect Italian interest in Safavid Persia that goes back to the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when reports from Persia by Italian merchants and spies started pouring in concerning the establishment of an anti-Ottoman state on the eastern border of Turkey. Thirdly, the description of Aly as “foolish and false,” on the one hand, and of the rites of Abubac and Osman as “impure and wicked,” on the other, reveals Minadoi’s equal hatred for Ottomans and Persians, Sunnis and Shi’as.

The impact of Ismail’s “turning Turk” was very profound in Persia. As a result, the clerics rebelled against the decision and many had to migrate to Mughal India to keep their declared sect (Gholsorkhi, 1994; Newman, 2006). Minadoi, however, talks about the possible motives of Ismail’s change of religion without reaching any conclusion. It is uncertain, in his view “whether he did it because he was in love with this wicked worship, and had learned this abomination, rather than any other, as we sayd before or whether he did it to revoke his neighbours the *Mesopotemians*, the *Babilonians* and *Assyrians* under his banner” (Minadoi, 1595, 10-11). Ismail’s conversion, according to Minadoi, was not well received in Persia and a number of Persians were imprisoned, exiled or killed. The major casualty of this policy was the religious figures who resisted Ismail’s move. Ismail was murdered on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1577 having ruled Persia for one year, seven months and six days (Minadoi, 1595, 14).

The Ottoman Turks’ interest in Persian affairs at the time of Ismail’s death is also commented on by Minadoi. The information was transmitted by one of the Turkish Bassas who was the governor of the city of Van. The Bassa sent the Ottoman Sultan the “most perfect information of all these stirres in Persia, discoursing unto him of the death of *Ismahel*, the consultations of the *Sultans*, the treacheries & death of *Periaconcona*, the broyles between the king and the *Sultans*, the nature of the new king being diseased in his eyes, little esteemed by his subjects...” (Minadoi, 1595, 18). After mentioning the visually

impaired Persian ruler enjoying little respect from his subjects, Minadoi logically develops the theme of a fragile Persian state under threat from the Ottomans and facing the danger of obliteration. The reports by the above mentioned Bassa,

might inflame the mynd of *Ottoman* to convert his forces agaynst an enemy of small counsell and much confusion: adding thereunto, that never was there greater opprtunity to overcome that kyng then now was offered, and that in any case, he should not let slip such an occasion, as the Ottoman kings never had before to obtayne so certayne and so famous victoreys, with so great glory and felicity in these enterpryses (Mindoi, 1595, 18).

The Ottomans are shown grabbing this opportunity under Amurat (Murad) and resolving to conquer Persia. The Persian ruler's representation is very interesting, mixing classical and Islamic elements. Amurat is said to be developing his plan against the Persians by proving to his forces that by conquering Persia, they will be "subduing a king of an ancient time, disseting and estranged from the lawe of *Mahomet*, a contemner of his majesty, and to be short, his only corivall and odious competitor in all the East" (Minadoi, 1595, 19). Historical, religious and personal reasons are given by the Ottoman ruler as to why Persia should be conquered and subjected to his rule. Persia is represented as a weaker force when compared to the Ottomans especially because of "engynes of war" in which they "far surpass[ed] the Persians" (Minadoi, 1595, 19). So apart from the incapable leadership and less sophisticated weapons, the third important factor that went against the Persians was Amurat's peace agreement with the Christian states. The Christian princes were directly responsible for strengthening the Ottoman Turks against Persia. In Minadoi's view, Amurat,

was greatly favoured by the present state of Christendome, at that tyme being wholly in league & amity with him: and the peace yet continuing that the Emperour had made with him: and the rather, because he was verily perswaded that he should not have any disturbance by the Catholike king, who no doubt would graunt him a truce by reason of his warres in Flanders, wherewith hee perceived hee was shrewdly occupied... (Minadoi, 1595, 19-20).

Minadoi's approval or rejection of such peace treaties is not expressed here. But he is emphatic that one of the reasons the Ottomans were bent on fighting against the Persians was that it was "all quiet on the Western front." In Minadoi's words: "In this generall tranquillity & common peace with the Potentates of Christendome, did Amurat with more

security and bouldness discourse with him selfe about the broaching of this warre in Persia” (Minadoi, 1595, 20). Though Minadoi does not out-rightly condemn this action by the “Potentates of Christendome,” one can feel that he did not like the “generall tranquility” that Amurat enjoyed as a result.

Amurat consulted his ministers about the war against Persia and they were split on the issue as some favoured amity between themselves and the Persians and by combining their forces launch a strong attack against the Christians of Europe. Minadoi critically exposes the lack of morality among the Ottomans who hotly debated the pros and cons of war against Christians or Persians without giving any consideration to the fact that they had a treaty with the Christian princes. The Ottomans’ supposed habit of violating oaths and promises has also been highlighted by the author as it is highlighted by John Foxe time and time again in his *Acts and Monuments*. The final decision that emerged from these consultations was to launch a campaign against the Persians and not the Christians, and it emerged as a result of expediency and not any moral obligation. It was the chief vizier Mahomet whose opinion prevailed in the end. Mahomet “was of advice that it would prove a more easy and lesse dangerous attempt to warre with the Persians, then with the christian princes...” (Minadoi, 1595, 21). The minister also hints at the unstable political conditions in Persia, which necessitates an anti-Persian policy. He also shows an awareness of European affairs and warns the Ottoman Sultan of the dangers of war with any of the European princes at the time, as it would be equivalent to fighting the whole of Christendom. In his view, as presented by Minadoi, “...to wage war agaynst the Christian Princes, was not to make that Prince onely his enemy agaynst whom he should fight...but it was to bid battel to all the Potentates of Christendome...” (Minadoi, 1595, 21). This presumed unity of Christendom in the late sixteenth century was a fantasy, and it is not clear if this was really the view of the Ottoman minister or Minadoi’s wish that he expresses through an Ottoman tongue. It is evident from a study of early modern Anglo-Ottoman relations that the Ottomans kept themselves abreast of the developments in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and it would have been naïve on the part of the minister to suggest that war against one Christian prince would be taken as war against all Christian kings.

Minadoi briefs his readers about the outcome of these consultations in the Ottoman court in favour of fighting a war against Persia. He presents a contrasting view of the differences between Ottoman war in Asia and Europe. The war in Asia against Persia is a war “against dartes, against swordes, against Citties either lying open or slenderly fenced” (Minadoi, 1595, 22). The war in Europe, on the other hand, was a war “agaynst lighteninges and fyres, against bowes and arrowes, against devouring flames, against strong places fortified with munitions and instruments of death” (Minadoi, 1595, 22). This view of Asia and Europe is essentially a proto-Orientalist view of the two regions where Asia is conceived as inferior in military technology when compared to Europe. But in this whole episode, the status of the Ottoman Turks becomes contested territory: whether Minadoi considers them Asian or European, whether their expertise in war is Asian or European expertise.

One of the most important statements by Minadoi on the cause of war between the Ottomans and Safavids undermines the importance of sectarian differences between the two neighbours. Minadoi is consistent in presenting Persians and Ottomans as sharing the same religion and does not harp upon the theme of religious difference as a cause of the enmity between them. According to the author,

...all men can see that neither zeale of religion, nor any injurie received from the Persian Kinges, but only the ambitious desyre of Amurat to subdue a kingdome, both in his owne conceyte and also by other men's relation, ill governed by an effeminate and sottish king, and through civill dissention brought into great danger, was the first provocation of making this warre (Minadoi, 1595, 23).

So, it was not the Ottoman ruler's religious fervour that called for this war, but a lack of capability and “manliness” in the Persian ruler as well as the “civill dissention” in Persia that caused this war. Minadoi appropriates this situation for his European readers by drawing a moral for them: “...and thereby may all Catholikes learn, that there is nothing more pernicious to the Christian Commonwealth than civil discord” (Minadoi, 1595, 23). The quotation in a sense equates Persia with the Christian Commonwealth as both are the targets of “Turkish tyranny.” It also shows that he is calling for an end to Catholic-Protestant conflict and only by doing so the Christians would be able to save themselves from such external threats.

Book Two starts from the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and right from the beginning, Minadoi gives much importance to Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and the fourth caliph of Islam after him. "Mahamet, or (as some call him) Mahomet was born in the year of our salutation 593 or (as others write) 567. of Abdalla, the son of Abdel Mutalep, who had also another son called Abutalep, father to Aly..." (Minadoi, 1595, 39). The author mentions the Prophet Muhammad's marriage with Khadija and their daughter "Fattime, who afterwards was the wyfe of the aforesayd Aly..." (Minadoi 39). The story follows the usual European route of Muhammad's contact with the Nestorian monk and his self-proclaimed prophethood with the expected negative comments about Muhammad's character and personality.

Minadoi also talks about the Muslim holy text, the Qur'an through which Prophet Muhammad taught his people "the manner of praying...with an honorable kynd of prayer, made to that one God, whom this people being but lately revolted to these idolls and monstrous lyes did little understand" (Minadoi, 1595, 40). Minadoi seems to be impressed by the wording of the prayer which he quotes a little later in the book. Calling it "an honorable kind of prayer" is a testimony to the fact that Muslim monotheism appealed to him. The prayer taught by Muhammad to his followers is reproduced by Minadoi as follows:

*In the name of the religious & mercifull God. Praised be the soueraign Lord of the worlds, the pittifull, the mercifull, the Lord of the day of iudgement. Thee we serue: from thee we looke for helpe: shew vnto vs the right way, that which thou hast shewed to the prophets, not that, for which thou art angry with the wicked, Amen* (Minadoi, 1595, 40, Minadoi's Italics).

The first sentence is a partial translation of the famous formula used by Muslims to start any work and it precedes all the chapters of the Holy Qur'an except one. The prayer is a translation of the meanings of the first chapter of the Qur'an known as Al-Fatiha which is compulsory for all Muslims to recite in every rak'at of the five time daily prayer. According to one of the traditions of the Prophet, no prayer is complete unless Al-Fatiha is recited. The marginal note reinforces the commonality of the Ottomans and the Persians and says: "A prayer invented by Mahamet, common both to the Persians and to the Turks and to all those that profess Mahamet" (Minadoi, 1595, 40). Minadoi mentions the

frequency of Muslim prayers with their timings. The Prophet Muhammad “commanded that it should be said five tymes a day, namely, in the morning, at noone, at evening, at night, and two of the clocke after midnight” (Minadoi, 1595, 40).

Following some detail about the life of the Prophet, Minadoi devotes space to the differences among Muslims after the passing away of the Prophet Muhammad. He starts his narrative from the time when he was ill and was unable to lead prayers: “...while he was sicke, to the end that his....orders should not cease and specially that his new-devised manner of prayer should not be left, he appointed Abubacher, his second father in law, for him and in his steed to keepe the first and chiefe place in the Moschea at Mecca” (Minadoi, 1595, 42). This was, according to Minadoi, the prelude to difference among Muslims. The major shock of this appointment was felt by the Prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law, Ali: “With great silence, although with as great marvell, was this determination of Mahamet tolerated: but particularly as great grief had Aly and his kinse folkes to heare these newes, supposing that the succession should rather have belonged to Aly, being both Nephew & Son in Law to Mahamet” (Minadoi, 1595, 42). It is interesting to note that Minadoi places the beginning of discord among Muslims in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad at the time when Abu Bakr started leading prayer in his absence.

Abu Bakr at first considered surrendering in Ali’s favour on account of the latter’s “neerenesse in bloud for his agility in body, & for his valour in Armes” (Minadoi, 1595, 42) but then changed his mind upon advice from his colleagues. Not only did he change his mind, “...he began openly to resist Aly, and to use not only reasons, but force also against him: so that he established himself in that Succession” (Minadoi, 1595, 43). The Sunni sources do not discuss this discord and are of the view that there was no difference between Ali and the first three Caliphs who preceded him. The real problem, in their view, started in the reign of Ali over his alleged leniency towards the killers of Othman, the third Caliph of Islam. Nevertheless, there are reports of Ali’s delayed oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr, which according to some historians was a symptom of Ali’s unhappiness over his becoming the Caliph. Minadoi also narrates that Abu Bakr deprived Ali and Fatima of all the property that they inherited from Prophet Muhammad on account that “a Prophet cannot separate his substance from his dignities and knowledge: but whosoever is left heire of a man’s

wisdom, is also taken to be heire of a man's riches" (Minadoi, 1595, 43). This issue remained important among Muslim writers and many books were written concerning it, according to Minadoi.

One of the most interesting passages deals with the beginning of schism in contemporary Islam and Minadoi places this date in the early sixteenth century with the emergence of the Safavid Empire in Persia. He presents Islam as a monolithic single entity despite various states and governments that adhered to it. In his own words:

And although the East was divided into diverse and sondry States and Governements of many persons, yet notwithstanding the superstition of Mahamet was with all conformity maintained by them all, neither was there heard either of any schisme, or insurrection, or waighty dissention among that people... (Minadoi, 1595, 44).

Minadoi then asks how the schism started in Islam, and according to him this "novelty" was initiated by one whom he calls "Sexchiuni" or alternatively "Siec Giunet." The major principle of the new sect as explained by Minadoi was to emphasize,

That those three first Successors of Mahamet, were unjust and unlawfull usurpers of the dignitie, That modest and just Ali onely ought to be named the lawfull Successor, That he alone ought to be called upon in the payers for helpe, and that by all possible meanes all honors should be yeilded and rendered to him, and taken from those three first, as from persons that were undoubtedly damned and altogether reprobate (Minadoi, 1595, 44).

In order to further elucidate the Persian hatred for the first three successors of the Prophet Muhammad, he quotes a prayer used by the Persians which clearly shows Persian opposition to the Turks: "Cursed be Abubacher, Omar, and Ottoman, and God be favourable to Aly, and well pleased with him" (Minadoi, 1595, 45). One of the significant aspects of this prayer seems to be its accuracy in terms of the names of the Caliphs and the order in which their names are mentioned. Secondly, the Persian disliking for the first three Caliphs as demonstrated by Minadoi was a major bone of contention and one of the most potent charges against the Shi'as. In the histories of Muslim sectarian polemical literature and in technical terms this is known as "Tabarra" (Stanfield-Johnson, 2004). Following the establishment of this divergent opinion, the Persians started visiting the graves of Ali and



his sons in Cufa every year as the Ottomans would visit the graves of first three successors of the Prophet. According to him:

...the very kinges of Persia themselves used to be crowned and girte with their sworde in Cafe neere unto Babylon...where everafter, their great Calife was woont to keepe his residence, as being the man that represented Aly, and occupied the chiefe roome of their filthy and damnable Priesthood (Minadoi, 1595, 45).

The use of words such as ‘filthy’ and ‘damnable’ is symptomatic of Minadoi’s hatred for the Persian form of religion. Minadoi was a staunch Catholic and a parallel between Shi’a and Protestant forms of religion might be suggested here. Any such religious divergence from the mainstream is problematic, Minadoi seems to be suggesting. He does not give an exact date for the beginning of Persian “superstition” as he likes to call it, but it was considered a contemporary event by a forerunner of Minadoi. Paolo Giovio held that the Persian form of religion and Lutheran Protestantism began at the same time, though Minadoi tends to differ with him. Giovio was of the view that under the pretense of religious disputes, both the Safavids and Ottomans were pursuing political and economic interests. According to him:

First of all (as is clearly established), over and above the mutual hatred of the two peoples handed down from their fathers and grandfathers, they have been led by insane persuasion to quarrel among themselves about religious beliefs...Although with ill-concealed greed, they struggled by different routes for the same goal, that with strengthened and increased riches the boundaries of their kingdoms might be extended as widely as possible...Through the not dissimilar plague of disturbed religion recently unloosed by Luther we also see Christian peoples fighting each other, as if some malign star envied peace and tranquility in this wretched century (Quoted in Siraisi, 2007, 251-52).

The reference to the Protestant Reformation and the resulting hostilities between Christians of opposing beliefs immediately after the mention of Safavid-Ottoman “quarrel” shows that Giovio considered the two developments in the east and west as related and worthy of comparison. One of the points on which Minadoi and Giovio differ is about the time of the beginning of the division in Islam and Christianity. In Giovio, we find a sense of simultaneous beginnings of the Persian Shi’ite form of Islam and Lutheran Protestant form of Christianity. If we tend to agree with Giovio, there is much scope to believe that the Catholics considered Shi’ism to be a deviant form of religion in the same way they considered Protestantism.

Minadoi clearly had such parallels in mind, and wrote concerning the conflation of Persians and Lutherans:

By this briefe narration, it appeareth that Paulus Giovius hath erred, where he writeth that the superstition of the Persians did begin in Persia at the very same tyme, that the heresy of Luther was sowed in Germany: and where he maketh one Aradvelle, who was also called Aidere, to be the author of the Persian Faction: whereas he is notably deceived both in respect of the tyme, and also of the person: of the tyme, for that it sprang up before the publication of Luthers religion: and of the person likewise, for that Ardvelle was not the first inventor thereof... (Minadoi, 1595, 46).

But it was not Paolo Giovio alone who tried to find similarities between the Lutheran Reformation and the rise of Shi'a Islam in early 16th century. There is more textual evidence of the equation between Reformation and Shi'ism. William Berker translated a Greek work by Saint Basil (ca. 329-379) into English which was published in 1557. Berker, in his introduction to the work finds parallels in ways Christianity, Islam as well as other religions had to undergo splits and divisions in the early part of the sixteenth century. He starts his discourse like this:

True it is (gentle reader) that aboute the yeare of oure lorde, M.cccc.xcix.[1499] there arose thoroughoute the worlde, by the secret workmanshyps of the heauens, and cruell constellation of the sterres, diuisions and factions of religion, not only amonge the Mahomites and Christians, but also in the furthest and vnknown partes of the earth, aswell Easte as Weste, where the people be ydolatoures, and honour for theyr Goddes monstrouse and fonde creatures: the greatest effectes whereof was sene in Persia and Germania (Basil, 1557, A2r).

The rise of Protestant Christianity in Germany and Shia Islam in Persia is assigned to a divine plan to divide all the religions of the world but the most important impact of “the secret workmanship of heavens and cruel constellation of stars” was faced by Islam and Christianity. Berker then goes on to relate to his readers the history of schism in Islam though he does not devote much space to the Reformation on the grounds that his readers already know much about it. At one point, the author compares the two new developments in Islam and Christianity in terms of their attitude towards knowledge.

Many opinions ensuyne of this sect, one was more wycked among vs Christians, then amonge the Mahomites: for wher as they were contente to haue one of the auntyent interpretours of the lawe, to be the staye of the same, we wuld haue none

at all, but that euerye manne shulde be a prophet at his pleasure: by reason wherof folowed y<sup>e</sup> grosse errorr, that learnynge and knowledge was not alonely not necessary and expediente, but also wycked and vnprofytable. Who so euer was reputed learned, he was abhorred lyke a serpent (Basil, 1557, A4r-A5v).

In the light of the conflation of Persians and Lutherans in Paulus Giovius and William Berker, one can presume that there was a vague sense of similarity between the developments of these two sects which needs to be investigated further on the same lines.

The idea of the simultaneous beginning of schism in Islam and Christianity also finds expression in the writings of the French humanist Louis Leroy. According to Leroy: "...at about the same time Luther in Saxony, Techel Cuselbas, and the Sophy in Persia, and others elsewhere meddled with reforming the customary religious rites and changing the accepted doctrines" (Gundersheimer, 1966, 108). This is a further testimony to the widespread understanding of the rise of sects in Christianity and Islam as parallel developments which implied the affinity between Shi'ism and Protestantism. Luther and the Persian Sophy in this perspective become interconnected for their role in reforming their respective religions.

By far the most important literary example of Persian-Protestant conflation is the "Mahomet-Haly" episode in William Percy's *Mahomet and His Heaven*. The only extant early modern play portraying Prophet Muhammad on the stage makes it highly unique. Even more significant is the fact that Percy had some knowledge of the sectarian differences in Islam and he understood these differences in terms of Catholic-Protestant differences, as has been suggested by Matthew Dimmock, a recent editor of the play. Percy presents the Muslim schism as the difference between the Prophet Muhammad and his cousin and son-in-law Ali and he was aware that the 'Turks' and Persians were the followers of Muhammad and Ali respectively. Thus, Percy conveys the ancient nature of the schism in Islam as well as its contemporary relevance, as manifested in the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians which were much discussed in the years preceding the writing of the play.

The Persian sect, like the other Catholic conflations of Persians and Lutherans, is considered heretical and Haly is equated with Luther. While Haly narrates the story of his

urge to end their schism, he tells Mahomet of the souls of both sects who came to him and, “Yours brought their Alcoran, by you confirmed,/ The other it of late by mee reformed” (Dimmock, 2006, V.xiii.30-32).

Percy’s reference to the ‘reformation’ brought about by Haly ‘of late’ clearly brings to mind Martin Luther’s reformation in Christianity. Read in the light of the Percy family’s Catholic background as has been suggested by Dimmock (“Introduction” p.13), it is easy to understand the conflation of Haly’s sect with Lutheranism. The obvious parallel between the two was the late origin of both Shi’ism and Protestantism as contrasted with the original religion that was Christianity and Islam followed by Roman Catholics and Ottoman Turks respectively.

The ‘heresy’ of Haly becomes evident when we read the following lines in the play:

Haly, subscribe (eftsoones quoth these) and let not  
Thy precious soule pollute with sin and error  
....  
Replyde th’ other, No Haly, no, do thou still  
Maintaine, by all the Art thou may, thy former  
Order and Institution, which ever  
Hath beene, by most wizards of the world,  
Accounted best.

(V.xiii. ll.35-37, 40-44)

Change Haly with Luther in the above lines and it would become a Catholic-Protestant polemic. As it would have been difficult to show the superiority of Catholic faith over the Protestant in Elizabethan England, William Percy adopted an ingenious technique to put forward his message by allegorizing the Christian schism as Muslim schism and by showing Haly surrendering to Mahomet’s religion, since he wanted to emphasize the falseness of Lutheran Protestantism.

The last lines spoken by Haly in the play contain an explicit reference to a Christian backdrop to the “Mahomet-Haly” episode in the play:

Haly  
Mahomet, I yield, and withall but require  
I may be accounted one worthy but  
To hold the Booke unto my Saviour.

(V.xiii. ll.69-71)

“Saviour” is the most commonly used term for Jesus Christ in the English language. Haly’s wish to “hold the Booke” to “my Saviour” apparently Christianizes him and thus reiterates the point that Percy exploited Muslim sects to highlight Christian schism and, as has been suggested by Dimmock and other critics, he exhorts the Christians to unite (Dimmock, 2006, 30).

A variety of accounts of Muslim sectarian differences existed in early modern England. While Anthony Jenkinson, Geoffrey Duckett and Thomas Minadoi explained that the differences emanated from a crisis of succession after the death of the Prophet Muhammad among the companions of the Prophet, there were others who treated the schism in Islam as a contemporary event in Safavid Persia and initiated by either the Persian Sophy or his ancestors. This second way of understanding the schism implied the correspondence between Muslim and Christian schism. The way Percy shows Mahomet and Haly in opposite camps is intriguing as this was not the way Muslim sectarian differences were explained. However, this was not Percy’s invention. One early modern travel account of Ottoman Turkey presents the Muslim schism like Percy. It was once again the French traveler, Nicolas de Nicolay, who depicted Muslim sectarian differences as being the difference between Prophet Muhammad and Ali. Matthew Dimmock, in his explanatory notes to some of the passages in the play refers to the similarities between the play and Nicholay’s account. Presenting Mahomet and Haly as the two leaders of Muslim schism by Nicholay and subsequently by Percy reveals the latter’s debt to the former. According to Nicholay:

Presently all Persians are Mahometistes, like unto the Turkes, which two nations, notwithstanding that they both have same faith, yet are different in Ceremonies and opinions, for that Haly...being the second Calyphe would no more beare this name, but would be called a messenger of God, as great or more than Mahomet, whose institutions, lawes and ordinances, he changes and disannulled and made new ones, whereby it came to passé that Mahometistes were divided (Nicolay, 1585, 116).

This clearly shows the similarity between Nicolay and Percy as far as the opposition between Mahomet and Haly is concerned. Further evidence that Percy might have relied on Nicolay is the way he spells “Haly.” Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth Caliph of Islam, came to be known in England in the aftermath of English trading voyages to Persia in 1560s and 1570s. But his name is transcribed as “Mortus Ali” or “Mortus Aly/Ally/Alli” in those

accounts and this tradition is followed by Day, Rowley and Wilkins in their play *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* as well as their source Anthony Nixon's pamphlet of the same title. But Percy's usage of "Haly" rather than "Mortus Ali" or "Mortus Aly/Ally/Alli" reveals his indebtedness to Nicolay rather than the more widely disseminated accounts of English traders to Persia through Eden and Hakluyt. The only other example that comes closer to "Haly" is Varthema's use of "Hali" in his travel narrative discussed above. The conclusion that can be drawn is that Percy had learnt of the opposition of "Haly" and "Mahomet" from Nicolas de Nicolay's travel narrative.

The conflation of Persians and Protestants—both being recent developments in east and west—was inspired by the Catholic agenda to show that both Persians and Lutherans were deviant groups. The Protestants, on the other hand, seem to offer a different conflation. One such example is found in the work of Edward Dering, who equates the Persians with the Catholics. In order to reject any new doctrine that sprang up after the message of Jesus Christ, he declares all subsequent religions as idolatrous: "the idolatries of Ismael, king and priest of the Persians: and the idolatries of Mahomet, king and priest of the Sarasins: and the idolatries of the Pope and Papall men, this day kings and priestes, as proude as the other" (Dering, 1577, A7r). By mentioning Ismael before the Prophet Muhammad, Dering may be suggesting that Ismael was also a prophet like Muhammad. The reference to the idolatries of Ismael, Muhammad and the Pope asserts a similarity between Islam and Catholicism. Equating the Prophet Muhammad with the Pope is also quite common in early modern writings. What is uncommon is conflating the Persian king with the Catholic Pope. Dering also exhibits his knowledge of the sectarian differences in Islam when he mentions the sects of "Homares and Haly, Cuselbasoe or Casaboe" and he again conflates Muslim sects when he mixes them with "Thomists or Scotists, white friers or black" (Dering, 1577, A7r), which shows that he accepts no other interpretation of religion apart from his own.

Another example of Catholic-Persian conflation is found in Thomas Bell's *The anatomie of popish tyrannie...* (1603). Bell gives an extended comparison of Shah Ismael and the founder of the Jesuit order Ignatius and blames the latter for following the footsteps of the former. He says: "...what is now in practise among our Iesuites, you shall find they follow the same steps in christianisme, which *Ismael* first trode in Mahumetisme" (Bell, 1603, 60).

The first point of comparison involves the “fabulous visions” that both exploited to attract the general masses towards their cause. Bell only provides details of the visions of Ignatius who claimed “that sometimes he spoke with God, sometimes with Christ, sometimes with our Ladie, or *S. Peter*” (Bell, 1603, 59). Visions and dreams played an important role in Safavid historical writing, as has been demonstrated by Sholeh Quinn (Quinn, 1996). It seems that Bell was aware of some of the “fabulous vision” narratives regarding Shah Ismael, on the basis of which he drew this comparison. The next point of comparison is the role Ismael and Ignatius played in initiating a new understanding of religion deviating from the established canons.

...as *Ismael* fetched out of *Hali*, the pretended brother of *Mahomet*, a new branch of religion taken from the old stocke; so *Ignatius* christening himselfe with the new name of a Iesuit, in steed of the name of a Christian authorized from the Apostles, builded vp a religion neuer anciently obserued by our Church (Bell, 1603, 60).

It is evident that Bell considered Ismael’s “new branch of religion” to be a “religion never anciently observed” like Ignatius’ new religion under the name of the Jesuits and as this new branch of Christianity was an unauthorized version of the true religion, Shi’a Islam, on the same analogy, stands as an unauthorized version of what Bell calls “Mahumetisme.” Bell goes on to compare how they both changed established customs and how they have a common history of starting from very few followers and reaching up to millions and especially how Ismael declared himself the “Prophet of God” and the Jesuit leader called himself the “Vicar of God.” He concludes this comparison by drawing his readers’ attention to the broader political implications of such developments: “In these proceedings and practises, *Ismael* troubled and turmoyled the Mahometicall state; and shall not we mistrust in Rome, this same new Iesuited *Sophi*?” (Bell, 1603, 60). If Christendom was to prosper and avoid the trouble and turmoils “Mahometicall state” has gone through because of Ismael, it would have to tackle the problem of division in Christianity represented by the “new Jesuited Sophy” Ignatius. Before going on to the next topic Bell sums up his polemic against Jesuits in five points. One of the points is that “Iesuitisme is a new late vpstart Mahumetisme” (Bell, 1603, 60). While the whole comparison follows the similarities between Persian branch of Islam and Jesuitical Christianity, the summary point reveals that Bell considered the Persian form of Islam as ‘Mahumetisme’ despite its recent origin in Ismael. Moreover, this shows the employment of one of the most popular techniques of both

Catholic and Protestant polemic writers to charge the opponent as being the complicit with the “Turke.” Bell is unique in the sense that he does not malign Jesuits as serving the cause of the “Turke” but rather he uses the analogy of Persians instead. It is startling to some extent as Persia was having a lot of good press in Europe because of Shah Abbas’s efforts to seek Christian help through Anthony Sherley’s diplomacy to deal with the Ottomans. Perhaps this shows that there were people who were never convinced of the Anglo-Persian alliance and despite all the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians, the Muslim identity of Persia never greatly diminished.

Another contemporary of Thomas Bell involved in polemics against the Catholics was Andrew Willet. In a work published in the same year as Bell’s book, he replies to the objections raised by the detractors of the Church of England in the form of a dialogue. One of the objections against the Protestants that he records compares them with the Persians. The first part of the objection says that the “The Mahometanes were neuer more wicked then after the Persian schisme and diuision amongst them” (Willet, 1603, 55). After mentioning the harmful effects of division in other religions and nations, Willet concludes the objection: “The conclusion must be: *Ergo*, Protestants being so diuided, are most wicked...” This reveals the equivalent status of “Persian schism” in Islam to Protestantism in Christianity from a Catholic perspective while in Protestant thought as demonstrated by Derek and Bell above, the Persians and Catholics were one and the same thing. Willet rejects the proposition that Protestants and Persian schismatics are equally wicked through diverse arguments but the proposition is enough to show that a parallelism between the two existed in early modern Catholic thought.

The mutual hatred between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians is often seen as mirroring the Catholic-Protestant divisions in early modern Europe and a discourse of heresy permeates debates concerning schismatic difference. In this instance, unlike the above examples, we do not have a perception of Ottomans and Persians either equated with Catholics or Protestants. One such example is found in one of the letters written by Sir Christopher Hoddesdon to William Cecil and Lord Burghley in 1578. The letter narrates recent events in the Persian court regarding the succession of the new Persian ruler. The writer explains the Persian-Ottoman enmity and when the Persian king intended to have a peace agreement



with the Ottoman Sultan, the nobles of Persia objected to “enter into these terms with the common enemy” because the Ottomans were “as great adversary to their religion as Papists are to Lutherans” (CSP Foreign, Elizabeth I, Vol. 12, p.695). An even more explicit comparison of the same sort is given by George Abbot in his book dealing with the description of the world. According to him:

The Persians are all at this day Saracens in religion beleaving on Mahomet: but as Papists and Protestants do differ in opinion, concerning the same Christ: so doe the Turkes, and Persians about their Mahomet: the one pursuing the other as heretics with most deadly hatred. In somuch that there be in this respect, almost continuall warres between the Turkes and the Persians (Abbot, 1599, B4v).

Abbot considered the Muslim schism to be centered on the personality of the Prophet Muhammad which makes it easy to equate it with Christian schism. The reference to heresy also facilitates the parallelism between Islam and Christianity. This ‘heresy’ of the Persians is also highlighted by Samuel Purchas who writes about a Persian ambassador to the Ottoman court in 1568, who was shot by a Turk. When the Turk was arrested, he, in Purchas’s words, “confessed that he did it because he was an Heretike, and sent from an Heretike.” Purchas further informs his readers that the Ottomans hate the Persians “as like the Traditinaory Iew doth the Textuarie, and the Papist the Protestant” (Purchas, 1613, 427). The above examples illustrate the early modern habit of reading Ottoman-Persian sectarian difference in terms of Catholic-Protestant difference.

The notion of liberty of worship to non-Muslims in Persia and Ottoman Turkey was exploited by the early modern Catholics to shame the Protestants who did not allow Catholic practices in their dominions. One of the examples of this discourse is found in Dudley Fenner’s *An antiquodlibet, or An aduertisement to beware of secular priests* (1602). The text takes Catholic accusations against the Protestants generally and against the English Protestants in particular one by one and rejects those charges. The fifteenth argument states the accusation in these words: “Under the Persian and the Turke there is liberty of conscience granted to all men. Her Maiestie therefore may with good reason grant the like libertie vnto English Romanists” (Fenner, 1602, 156). The author rejects this argument on the basis that “No action of a Pagan and atheall Monarch ought in a question of worship and service of the Lord to be a president unto a Christian Prince” (Fenner, 1602,

156). The propounders of the idea of freedom in Turkey and Persia were the Catholics who advocated the same liberty for Catholics in England, and they tried to show that Protestants were worse than ‘Turks’ and Persians in dealing with those who differ with them. Fenner, on the other hand, returns the argument upon his adversaries saying that those who enjoy this freedom and liberty under the Ottomans and the Persians are far better than the Catholics as the former don’t show any disloyalty towards their king as compared to the latter who are more loyal to a “forrayne Potentate.”

Minadoi’s book also highlights how the Ottomans tried to differentiate themselves from the Persians and it was mainly through a change of nomenclature. They started calling themselves “Sunni” and the Persians as Rafadi (Minadoi, 1595, 46). The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) cites the first use of the term Sunni in 1626. It was first used by an English merchant William Methold who went to Mughal India and spent some time in the Shia state of Golconda. Methold’s account was published in England by Samuel Purchas in 1626. Writing about the King of Golconda, Methold says: “He is by religion a Mahumetan, discended from Persian Ancestors, and retayneth their opinions, which differing in many points from the Turkes, are distinguished in their Sectes by tearmes of Seaw, and Sunnee” (Purchas, 1626, 995).

The use of “Sunni” by Minadoi thirty years before Methold has evaded the attention of the editors of the OED. He further explains the difference between the Ottomans and the Persians:

The Turkes...by reason of this new devysed novelty, thinking themselves to be of a sound and sincere opinion, did alwayes call themselves Sunni, (that is to say, men of a good faith) and on the other syde they called the Persians Rafadi, that is to say men of a false faith and going-astray... (Minadoi, 1595, 46).

Now looking at these definitions from a Catholic perspective, one would tend to agree that ‘Turks’ can easily be equated with the Catholics who considered themselves “men of a good faith” while the Persians could be conflated with Protestants “men of false faith and going-astray.” However, Palmira Brummet in her article on Shah Ismail shows that the early sixteenth century Venetian reporters of Persian affairs found many similarities between Shi’ites and Catholics (Brummett, 1996). In early modern writings, “Turke” was used as a term of abuse and it was widely used by both Catholics and Protestants against

each other. The ‘Turks’, on the other hand, considered the rise of Luther as a good omen and Suleyman the Magnificent arranged prayers for the success of Luther in Constantinople’s mosques (Brotton, 2002, 116). The above quotation also shows that Minadoi gained this knowledge from an Ottoman source as no Persian would have told him that they were called Rafadi, a term of insult.

Samuel Purchas, who was one of the most avid readers and collectors of the travel narratives in the early modern period, displays some impressive knowledge of the sectarian differences between the Ottomans and the Persians. In 1613 he published an erudite work on world religions titled *Purchas His Pilgrimage* which was published a number of times in the next two decades. One of the chapters in the book deals with the Persian religion and is titled “Of the Sophian Sect, or Persian Religion, as it is at this Present.” Purchas, on the authority of a sixteenth century Portuguese historian, Joan de Barros (d.1570), tells his readers that “the Persians call themselves Sia, which signifies the Vnion of one Bodie, but the Arabians call them Raffadian, that is Vnreasonable, and themselves Cunin...” (Purchas, 1613, 325). The ‘Sia,’ ‘Raffadian,’ and ‘Cunin’ are references to ‘Shi’a,’ ‘Rafizi,’ and Sunni respectively. The definition of ‘Sia’ as ‘Vnion of one Bodie’ is remarkably accurate. A further reference to Sunni is found again in Purchas in 1625, in his collection of travels titled *Purchas His Pilgrimes in Five Books*, we are told of the “schism of Haly, which made himself a greater Prophet then Mehemet: those that acknowledge Mehemet the greatest being called Sunni, and the followers of Hali Ssia...” (Purchas, 1625, 1214). This quotation in Purchas occurs not in an early modern text but a medieval one. This distinction between “Mahomet” and “Hali” is made by William of Tyre who is discussing the differences between the Soldan of Egypt and the Caliph of Baghdad. The reference to Sunni and Shi’a in a medieval text offers us a rare and interesting insight into the medieval Christian understanding of these sectarian differences. Norman Daniel, one of the authorities on Muslim-Christian encounters in the Middle Ages suggests that medieval Christians knew very little of Shi’a Islam (Daniel, 1993, 349). Nevertheless, we find some focus on the presence of Ali along with Prophet Muhammad in the eighth circle of hell in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and it has been suggested by Suzanne Conklin Akbari that this

arrangement may reveal Dante's knowledge of sectarian differences in Islam (Akbari,2000; Coggeshall, 2007).

Interestingly enough, Dante and William of Tyre are not the only medieval Christian scholars to demonstrate their knowledge of sectarian differences in Islam. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, a thirteenth century French writer, was also aware of Muslim sects, at least the Shi'ites. In one of his works, quoted by Akbari in her recent work, he states: "The Turks, Moors, Shiites, and other races of the world are enemies of the Church" (Akbari, 2009, 119). The use of terms such as 'Turks' and Moors and more importantly Shiites in thirteenth century is highly remarkable as Saracen was the most commonly used term for Muslims. Bartholomaeus not only shows his awareness of the ethnic diversity of medieval Muslims which was more often subsumed under the umbrella term "Saracen" but also reveals his understanding of sectarian diversity in Islam.

Minadoi is also emphatic about the major cause of dissension between the Ottomans and the Persians and is of the view that it was all about the four Caliphs and there is no truth in other accounts that tried to show that the difference revolved around the issue of the interpretation of the Qur'an or the implementation of Ali's law. He rejects these two causes of difference on the following grounds: "For as touching the Alcoran, they doo all expound it after one and the selfe same manner: and as for Aly, he never frames any lawe, but only confirmed that which he found already ordayned by Mahamet their only law-maker" (Minadoi, 1595, 46). Furthermore, Minadoi also explains that the Turks respected all the four Caliphs while the Persians revered only the fourth (Ali): "...the Turkes doo reverence Aly together with the other three Abubacher, Omar & Ottoman, as him that was also a successor to Mahamet: But the Persians, although indeed they worship Aly, yet for all that they doo not only not reverence the other three, but curse them & hate them as impious and damned persons" (Minadoi, 1595, 46-47).

Minadoi mostly calls the Shi'ite form of Islam the "Persian superstition." The other names that he uses are "Cheselbas" and the "Soffians." The author seems to believe that the term "Sofi" had no connection with the great grandfather of Ismail, Safiuddin. Rather, he implies the term Sofi means mystic as he understands by the term a holy and a wise man. There are

three important terms used by Minadoi for the founders of the new dynasty in Persia towards the end of 15th and early 16th century. The terms are Sofi or Sofiti (Sufi), Siec (Shaikh) and Saha (Shah). The first two are terms related to knowledge and spirituality while the last one is a term used in the political realm. The first Persian, in Minadoi's view, who deserved the titles of Sofi and Siec and not of Saha was Giunet, "because he gave his mind rather to matters of learning and studye, then to matters of Arme & government" (Minadoi, 1595, 47). Minadoi once again refutes Paulus Giovius on holding the view that "Ismahel was the first of all Persian kinges that merited the name of Sofi." The difference of opinion seems to have continued to the present day, since some scholars consider Sophi to be a family name of the Safavid rulers because of Sheikh Safiuddin (Parker, 1999, 81; Burton 2009, 31), one of the forefathers of Ismail, while other scholars are of the view that Sofi means the Sufi which denotes mystic (Coote, 1886, 112; Brummet, 1996). This issue was debated by many early modern Europeans who presented their view for and against the use of the term Sophi or Sophy for the Persian rulers.

Early modern writing on Islam as well as critical scholarship has dealt with the issue of conversion to Islam in some detail. Many works on "turning Turk" have appeared over the last decade which shows English perceptions of conversion to and from Islam. As the term "Turning Turk" shows, the major threat Christians faced in the early modern period was from the Ottoman Empire and the writers expressed their anxiety over Englishmen going native in foreign lands. As the Persians were perceived as opponents of the Ottomans, there is very little on their threat to Christianity in early modern English writings. Therefore, we do not have a term such as "turning Persian": interaction between the English and the Persians was also not as extensive as that between the English and the 'Turks', so the probability of conversion in Persia was far less than in Turkey. But this does not mean that there was a monolithic image of Persia as a non-threatening entity. Minadoi, who does not present Persia as better than Turkey, illustrates this by giving a history of two Christian brothers Simon and David who disputed who would be the ruler of Armenia after the death of their father. Simon, who was older, deserved to be the ruler but was forced to leave the country by the younger brother David. Simon went to seek help from the Persian king Tahmasp. The king readily sent four thousand horsemen under one of his captains and secretly told the captain to persuade David to embrace Islam and were he to do so, he was

to let him rule the country and imprison Simon. The captain exhorted Simon to embrace Islam but he remained steadfast in his Christianity and was taken to Tahmasp's court. Simon opts to trade a heavenly kingdom in return for a worldly kingdom on the condition of becoming a Persian and Minadoi terms this the "success of Simon" (Minadoi, 1595, 60). Minadoi concludes this story with an apt moral for the early modern readers: "From this success of Simon we may easily learne how dangerous a thing it is, to draw the Barbarians into our states and governments for our defence and helpe: for that wee see most manifestly, there is no one thing more doubtfull, more uncertaine, or more impious, then their faith or promises..." (Minadoi, 1595, 60).

The image of the Persian army in Minadoi is not that of a strong force. Because of the wars both internal and external, the cities that could offer help to Persia are not able to extend any help now. As a result, "...the Crowne of Persia being deprived of such and so many helpes, is at this day constrayned to wage warre with very slender forces..." (Minadoi, 1595, 72). At one point, we find a comparison between the Ottoman and Persian soldiers with a clear tilt towards Persia. "Those that follow & attend the exercise of warre," says Minadoi, "are for the most part men of noble race, and thereupon it commeth, that they are more hardy and valiant to soyle than to flie. And beeing compared with the Turkish people, (who for the most part are very rascalles, of vile race, raedy to fly and to ravine) they are by good right very worthie to be highly esteemed" (Minadoi, 1595, 73-4). Immediately after this, Minadoi reprimands the Persians for obliterating the difference between themselves and the Ottomans: "The Persians are great decievers, full of craftie Strategemes, unconstant, and breakers of their word: (a vice that seemeth to have beene alwaies proper to the Barbarians.)" (Minadoi, 1595, 74). To illustrate these negative aspects, the author turns to ancient Persia, showing the continuity of Persian identity. Here he mixes the Achaemenid and Safavid empires, since they resemble each other in the cruelty practiced by sons against their fathers. The matter of concern for Minadoi is that through this the Persians weaken themselves and "do make themselves spectacles of infamy to all the world" (Minadoi, 1595, 74). The conflation of ancient and contemporary Persia, pagan and Islamic, shows that for a Christian audience, there might be some characteristic Persian features that remained unchanged with the passage of time, though Persia passed through

different phases in her history. One of those features that resonate again and again in early modern writings is the tyranny and cruelty of the Persians.

One further important part of Minadoi's work that deals with Ottoman-Persian relations and their significance for early modern Europe is where the author details the visit of a Persian ambassador to the Ottoman court. Sinan Bassa, who was the commander of an Ottoman army that was preparing a grand attack on Persian lands, received an ambassador sent by the Persian king, Muhammad Khodabanda. The ambassador, who is called Maxut-Chan by Minadoi, is received in the Ottoman camp with great respect as Sinan was himself in favour of peace between the Ottomans and the Persians. "It is generally known," says Minadoi, "and I have in particular understood, how great the joy was, which the Turkes conceived of the coming of this Embassador, and how Cicala-Bassa did with all diligence dispatch certaine posts to the court with these good newes" (Minadoi, 1595, 160). Now the argument that Maxut-Chan puts forward for the rapprochement between the two warring nations is full of implications for the view that the schism between the Ottomans and the Persians was unbridgeable. The Persian ambassador expresses the sincerity of the Persian king's desire to be on peaceful terms with the Turks and tells him that,

...under the lawe of Mahomet their common Prophet, both the nations are conjoined together, so that they ought with one unitie and speciall concord defend and encrease their Names, by subduing the Christian people, who profesing to worship the true God and the true Prophet, do possess the most noble Cities of Europe: so was it a matter very inconvenient to contend among themselves, and seek to overthrow, yae and utterly to destroy one another: it being a thing quite contrarye to that union, which should be among people of one & selfe same religion: it being also rather the property of brute & savage beasts than of men, to drive & expulse out of their native nest, those that are the followers and worshippers of one & the self same Prophet (Minadoi, 1595, 162).

The plea for the unity between Persians and Ottomans equally applies to Catholics and Protestants. Minadoi is mindful of the fact that such a unity could play havoc against a fractured Christendom. Thus, once again, Sunni Ottomans and Shi'a Persians become a mirror image of Protestants and Catholics. The coming together of Ottomans and Persians—Barbarians—turns Catholics and Protestant into "brute & savage beasts" who despite professing the same religion and following the same Prophet wanted to destroy one

another. Here then, in the guise of the story of Ottoman-Persian unity, is a strong argument for the unity of Catholics and Protestants.

When Maxut-Chan appeared before the Ottoman Sultan, he made a speech on why the Persian king did not want to have a war with the Ottomans. After saying that his king was capable enough of fighting wars with his enemies the ambassador says he has been sent to conclude a peace agreement with the Ottomans following an important consideration. The consideration was: "...how contrarie it was to the mercifull nature of their common Prophete Mahamet to nourish contention & much more to cause the publike spilling of the blood of his nations" (Minadoi, 1595, 167). A little later in his proposal for peace, the Persian ambassador repeats the same anti-Christian sentiment that he expressed in front of Sinan Bassa. About Muhammad Khodabanda, the ambassador says:

...the king that now is, above all other embraced amitie with his Majesty, and did earnestly desire not only, that he might not make war against him, but also that he might find favour to bee linked in friendship and love with him, and so they two together might prosecute the noble and worthy enterprises against the Christian nations: which warre could not be but just and honest, for that it tended to the enlargement of their native religion, and to the suppression of the enemies & rebels to their own Prophet Mahamet. (Minadoi, 1595, 168-69)

Nothing came out of the embassy of Maxut-Chan as the conditions set by the Ottomans were so strict that they were difficult for the Persians to agree with. Maxut-Chan returned to Persia to brief the Persian king of his failed mission. The Persian king's reaction to his report was positive, and he intended to reward him, but as a result of some court intrigues, the king turned against him and wanted to put him to trial for his alleged favouring the Ottomans. Maxut-Chan upon knowing the intention of Persian King, fled to Sinan who transported him to Amurath in Constantinople. The shifting of Maxut to Turkey is another indication of the fluid and porous borders between the Ottomans and the Persians.

The whole Maxut-Chan episode has been graphically presented by Minadoi and this is because he was present in Constantinople when it took place. For example, at one place Minadoi says: "...as I understood by many credible persons while I was in Constantinople..." (Minadoi, 1595, 167). Secondly, Minadoi, as he claims, had the chance to interact with Maxut-Chan's son while he was in Aleppo. In fact, Minadoi issues a disclaimer that his narrative is true, provided his source was telling him the truth. In his



words, "...if the said Embassadors son did not tell us a lie, who diverse times did moste familiarly discourse with us upon every particularitie, while we visited him in Aleppo..." (Minadoi, 1595, 164). At another place, after giving a piece of information, Minadoi says, "...afterwards it was confirmed in Aleppo by the said Embassadors son, when rebelling against his king and entertained by the Turke, he was placed in the government of the said city of Aleppo..." (Minadoi, 1595, 167). The ambassador's son must have been a reliable source of information for Minadoi and the knowledge about what the ambassador expressed in the presence of Sinan and Amurath about the commonality of Ottoman and Persian religion and their common cause against Christianity might have challenged the views held by Minadoi's early modern readers. This episode endows the Persians with an unadulterated Islamic and anti-Christian identity which many early modern Europeans had tried to undermine in order to form an alliance between Persia and Christian states against the Ottomans.

After the failed mission of Maxut-Chan, another attempt was made by the Persian king to broker a peace agreement with the Ottomans. This was an embassy headed by a certain Ebrain-Chan who first came to the Ottoman military commander Sinan. He was one of the advocates of peace between the Ottomans and the Persians as he wanted to launch an offensive against Christian Europe. Minadoi describes Sinan's condition in these words:

Nothing in the world did Sinan hate more then this war & for the appeasing thereof he did not omit to attempt all possible meanes, having his minde altogether been against the affairs of the Christians in Europe & for the diverting of these wars from the east into some other quarters, he used and practised continually a thousand devices. At the lasy he wrought so much, be intreated so much, he write so many letters, & solicited the matter so earnestly, that the king was persuaded to send for him to Constantinople as soon as ever he was certified of the arrival of the new embassador from Persia, of whom Sinan had before advertised him (Minadoi, 1595, 187-88).

The ambassador is received in Constantinople "magnificiently" and the ambassador conveys the strong desire of the Persian king for peace with the Ottomans. He says that if the Ottomans reciprocate this desire "...there would ensue thereof the greatest unitie & friendship that ever was betweene the Mahometans, since the time their great Prophet had delivered to the world that wicked law of theirs" (Minadoi, 1595, 189).

While the Persian ambassador was in Constantinople in 1582, the ceremonies of the circumcision of Mahamet, the eldest son of Amurath began. We are given an account of the activities that happened there by Minadoi. He tells the readers of the European delegates in Turkey at this occasion:

And for this purpose from al the provinces of Christendome, by messengers dispatched in poste, were the catholike princes solemnly invited to the feastes, that upon this occasion were prepared. According to this their inviting there came thither ambassadors out of many countries of Europe with great giftes and presentes in token of peace and confedracie. And among the rest, the Venetians sent thither one Giacomo Soranzo, who by the great satisfaction, which he made to the king & all those of his court, revived the amity and friendship, which flourished betweene the king and that Senate (Minadoi, 1595, 189).

This shows that the Ottomans were one of the most powerful players in the early modern world and both Europeans as well as Persians were desirous of good relations with them.

The account of this imperial circumcision has been preserved in some Ottoman manuscripts studied by Derin Terzioğlu in his article titled “The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation.” The evidence from the Ottoman documents corroborates Minadoi’s information on how the Persians were mistreated. One of the manuscripts, Surname mentions the name of the Persian ambassador as Ibrahim Khan (Minadoi’s Ebrain-Chan) and he is referred to as the Governor of Kashan. According to Terzioğlu:

The Surname reports that the ambassador of “the evil-doing King of Vienna”(…i.e. the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II) had objected being seated next to the Safavid ambassador and supported his objection with a fatwa of the Ottoman seyhulislam which declared the killing of one Kizilbash to be more meritorious act than the killing of seventy infidels (Terzioğlu, 1995, 85).

Here is how Minadoi describes the treatment of the Persian embassy:

All the embasadors had their scaffold prepared and furnished, & the Persian ambassador had his scaffold also severall to himself, but yet with a farre different intent & respect then the rest is for that the other ambassadors were honored & regarded, as it was conuenient and agreeable to their degrees and estates, and receiued such entertainment as might he shewed at such a kind of Barbarous spectacles but the *Persian*, by reason of the scornes and iniuries done vnto him, did not onely not reioice at the saide feastes and triumphes, but also ministred himselfe great matter of laughter and sporte to the beholders. For among sundrie other wrongs and outrages that by the commandment of Amurath were done to the Persian nation by hanging certain counterfect pictures of Persians made of bushes

and stickes, and then burning them, and in many scornfull sortes abusing them: the king, for the great disdaine that he had taken against *Ebrain-Chan*, as one that not condescending to the conditions of peace which he expected, nor yeelding any more then Maxut-Chan and Aider Aga had done before, seemed to have come as a spie to marke the Turkish affaires (Minadoi, 1595, 189).

This clearly shows how the Ottomans mistreated the Persians publically and this might be done to show the Europeans their disliking for the Persians. It might have been a pleasing spectacle for the European envoys as it presented the impression that there was no chance of peace between the two Muslim neighbours which would have been good for Christendom. This episode, once again, presents Ottomans and Persians as two separate powers that were enemies to each other and their war could be “commodious for Christendom” as it would shift the frontier of war away from Europe into Asia.

Minadoi’s attitude towards Ottoman-Persian rivalry is ambivalent. In a religious sense, he conflates the Ottomans and the Persians and shows that they have the potential to shun their differences and become unified. He also asserts that their rivalry is beneficial for the state of Christendom, but like Foxe, he considers this to be part of a providential plan in which the enemies of Christianity weaken themselves by clashing against each other. But despite this apparent conflation of Ottomans and Persians, the two powers are represented as different and separate politically to the extent of fighting wars against each other. The title of the book strongly places the ‘Turks’ and the Persians in opposing camps which lead to their perception as two distinct powers. This history might have contributed towards developing an image of Persia that was anti-Ottoman and by inference pro-Christian, unlike ancient Persia that waged war against the Greeks and Romans in antiquity.

Minadoi’s book was an important text, since it explained the nature of differences between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians. Its influence can be gauged from the number of editions in various European languages, as well as the many extant copies in European and American libraries. Those parts of it concerning Shi’a-Sunni schism were copied verbatim by Richard Knolles, John Cartwright and Samuel Purchas. Though England had some knowledge of the schism in Islam through Jekinson and Duckett’s reports, Mindoi’s book was the most detailed narrative of sectarian differences in Islam as well as the wars caused by this schism. What is more fascinating in Minadoi is the framing of Christian sectarianism in

terms of Muslim sectarianism. As a result, Catholic-Protestant rivalries are superimposed on Shi'a-Sunni rivalries in the Muslim world. Muslims and Christians, in this sense, become the mirror images of each other. Though there is much talk of hatred between the 'Turks' and the Persians in *Minadoi*, he also shows the other side of the picture where 'Turks' and Persians are represented as believers of the same Prophet Muhammad. The detailed account of the embassies exchanged between the Safavids and the Ottomans and the way the Persian ambassador calls for unity among the believers of a "common Prophet" reveals the contemporary relevance of such appeals to Christian monarchs and this is well illustrated by William Percy in the Mahomet-Haly scene in his play. The commonality of belief between the 'Turks' and the Persians is exploited fully in other popular contemporary texts, which present Persia as an ally of the 'Turks' in anti-Christian causes and this is analysed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Romance and the Development of Islamic Persian Identities

The commodiousness of wars between the Ottomans and the Persian in the sixteenth century resulted in an image of Persia whose Muslim identity was to a great extent undermined and silenced by the early modern commentators of these wars. This silencing was done through explaining the sectarian differences between the two. While in some accounts of the wars, the Persians are given a sympathetic treatment against the Ottomans, in some others, both are considered as ‘enemies of Christ’ and ‘barbarians’ whose wars were of great benefit for the Christians whose security rested on continuous wars between the Ottomans and the Persians. Whether Persians were considered better than the Ottomans in early modern discourse or both were thought be equally anti-Christian, ambivalence towards Persia can easily be discerned. Persia did not pose any direct threat to Christendom in the early modern period and all their military force was exerted against the Ottomans who were “the great terror of the world”, as Richard Knolles stated in 1603. Consequently, there is a sense of the celebration of Ottoman-Safavid wars in early modern England. Nevertheless, a parallel development regarding the Persian image was an emphasis on Persian Islamic identity leaving out any reference to the schism in Islam as well as to the wars between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians. The English reading public was introduced to this aspect of Persia through the humiliating treatment of Anthony Jenkinson at the Safavid court. But this episode did not play a significant role in the development of this new Persian identity. Rather, it was through the texts written under continental influence in the Romance tradition that presented Persia as Islamic anti-Christian power. While Minadoi and John Foxe are ambivalent towards Persia, appreciating Persian wars against the Ottomans, on the one hand, and condemning Persians as “barbarous” on the other, the romance texts display no such ambivalence and show Muslims as a united against Christendom.

This perception of Persia was exclusively founded on contemporary reports of war. The images of Persia inspired by other sources are sometimes radically different. For example, the translation of Greek and Latin texts introduced the humanists to the classical wars of

Persia against Greece and they read it in conjunction with the contemporary aggression of the Ottomans against the Greeks and through this they saw continuity between the classical Persians and contemporary Ottomans. Discussing the origin of the Ottomans, James Hankins argues that Theodore Gaza, a Byzantine humanist, believed that the contemporary 'Turks' were to be identified with a Persian tribe that was mentioned by Strabo. Hankins believes that Gaza "suggested this in order to reinforce his patron Bessarion's analogy between the defense of modern Greece against the Turks and the defense of the ancient Greece against the Persians" (Hankins, 1995, 138). Another early Italian humanist, George Trebizond, is said to have "...identified Turks with Persians...whom he saw as the inveterate enemies of the Greek civilization" (Hankins, 1995, 138). The same identification of the 'Turk' and the Persian in Renaissance Italy is pointed out by Mustafa Soykut, who suggests that early modern Italian writers drew parallels between the Persians and the Ottomans. In his view, "...there was...an analogy drawn between the situation of the Turks and those of the Persians vis-à-vis the Greeks: The ancient Greeks and the European nations representing the civilized world and the West; and the Persians and Muslim Turks, representing the East, hence barbarism" (Soykut, 2001, 19). The shared history of Ottomans and Persians in terms of their anti-Greek actions brought them closer to each other in early humanist thought in Renaissance Italy.

Reading classical Persians as forerunners of contemporary Ottomans was one way to conflate the two as Muslims bent upon destroying a classical heritage. This reveals how early modern Ottoman identity was transported to the Persian past and how the two were joined together through aggression against the Greeks. But the most important source for Persian Islamic anti-Christian identity was the medieval romances that represented Persia as an enemy of Christendom. There has been much interest in the representation of Muslims in medieval literature over the last few decades. No work, however, has looked into the representation of different ethnicities professing Islam in the medieval imagination. It is generally thought that "Saracen" was the only term to denote a Muslim during the Middle Ages. The term "Saracen" was replaced by other ethnic terms such as Turk, Moor and Persian in the early modern period though Saracen still had a residual presence in the same period. It has been recently argued by Suzanne Conklin Akbari in *Idols in the East*

that the "...medieval construction [of Muslims] conflated categories of ethnicity and religion within a single term that served as a marker of both, that is "Saracen" (Akbari, 2009, 285). She goes on to state that in the early modern period, the term "Saracen" was replaced with ethnic terms such as "Turks" and "Moors" and she believes that

...the predominance of terms that denote ethnic or racial alterity ("Turk" and "Moor") in place of a term that had denoted both racial and religious alterity ("Saracen") signals a fundamental distinction between medieval and early modern Orientalism (Akbari, 2009, 285).

Naming Muslims in the medieval period is more complex than this. "Saracen" was indeed one of the major terms for Muslims in medieval Europe but what follows will show that medieval Europeans were also aware of different ethnicities among "Saracens." At least, they knew that Persia was ruled by a Sultan and Persians followed the edicts of the Prophet Muhammad. So in a sense Persian, like Saracen, was a term denoting both ethnicity and religion in the medieval period.

The tradition of conflating Persians and Saracens or presenting them as allies goes back to Old English literature, as has been shown by Katherine Scarfe Beckett. Citing evidence from the Pseudo-Methodius' *Revelationes* 1 and Aelfric's *Book of Judges*, she shows that Anglo-Saxons perceived Persia as "Saracenic" and anti-Christian as both accounts present Persia as an enemy of the Romans (Beckett, 2003, 155, 185). Presenting Persia as anti-Christian was given a new impetus in the wake of the crusading movement when Persians allied with the Arabs to fight against the crusaders. Persian characters figure in medieval English and French romances and the Persian ruler is mostly called the Sultan of Persia.

One example of this trend is found in the Middle English version of *Partonope of Blois*. This romance, originally composed in French, was translated into English during the Middle Ages and has been described as "certainly a masterpiece in its kind" (Uri, 1953, 86). Towards the end of the romance, the protagonist fights against the Sultan of Persia and kills him. The romance describes the "sawden of Perce" as the one who "...to Cristes lawe is adverse/ And levith on Mahound..." (ll.8750-51). William Wistar Comfort, in his article on Saracens in Italian poetry, also mentions Persia as a location where the hero of *Chanson de Roland* stays for sometime disguising himself as a Persian, solving the disputes of

Muslims and almost falling in love with Diones, the daughter of the Persian ruler. Comfort specially mentions Diones' prayer to God in which she recognizes both Jesus and Muhammad as prophets of God "...now seated respectively upon the right and left hand of God in glory" (Comfort, 1944, 885). The protagonist of another romance titled *Orlando* that was composed circa 1400 is said to have gone to Persia where he performs St George-like feats in the Persian court, eventually killing the Persian king and facilitating the conversion of two of his children (Comfort, 1944, 895). This suggests that Saracens in medieval romances were not only Arabs as is generally understood but also Muslims of other ethnic identities such as Persia.

Persians and their ruler, the Sultan, also appear in other medieval romances. One scholar has mentioned the presence of Persians in the 12<sup>th</sup> century *Romance of Horn*. The leader of the Saracens in this romance is named as the "soudein of Persia" (Speed, 1990, 575). Another example is found in *Guy of Warwick*, where the son of the Sultan and another prince play a game of chess. Upon losing the game, the Persian prince and his rival player start fighting, and the Persian prince is killed by the other player (Ellis, 1805, 61-62). The Sultan of Persia also appears as an ally of the Sultan of Babylon in *Sir Bevis of Hamptoun* while in *Sir Otuel*, a Christian knight is sent to kill the King of Persia, Perigon (Ellis, 1805, 125, 354). We also find a reference to "Sowdan of Perce" in *Sir Gowther*. The Christian Emperor in the romance receives an emissary from the Sultan of Persia with the message that the Emperor should send his beautiful daughter to him so that he could marry her. When the emperor refuses to comply with the message, the Sultan and the emperor's armies face each other on the battlefield. All these references to the character of the Sultan of Persia reveal that medieval romance perceptions of Persia were strongly Islamic and anti-Christian unlike early and mid sixteenth century English perceptions in which Persia was thought to be serving the Christian cause by attacking the Ottoman Turks. Nevertheless, the medieval perception of Persia as an Islamic force is rediscovered by early modern authors in 1580s and 90s and this results in a new image of Safavid Persia as an ally of the Ottoman Turk and thus the whole project of differentiating between the Ottomans and Safavid takes a curious new turn.



The dominant strand of representing Persia in early modern England, as has already been noted, was to present Persia as an ally of Christendom. The whole discourse of separating the Persians from the ‘Turks’ relied heavily on the idea that Christians and Persians could join forces against the Ottomans. Consequently, a sense of unity and proximity between the two started emerging in Europe. It was necessary for the success of such a project to undermine Persia’s Islamic identity and this was done by those writers who were convinced of the viability of the idea. Recently, works dealing with images of Persia in early modern England have suggested how the representation of Persia was different from that of the Ottoman Turks. Anthony Parr contrasts the two sets of representations in his introduction to the *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*. The Europeans saw the culture of the Ottoman Turks as “a deeply alien culture” and hatred against Islam coupled with the cruelty of the Ottoman Sultan resulted in “...an immovable stereotype of the raging and expansionist Turk.” However, “Persia was a rather different case...Like India or Japan, it was not so much Europe’s Other as its opposite or foil...” (Parr, 1999, 11). This is an interesting position, suggesting that early modern Europeans defined and fashioned themselves against the Ottoman Turks while the Persians were seen as a pale reflection of Europeans themselves. In the succeeding paragraphs, Parr discusses how authors were at pains to demonstrate the possibility of “Perso-Christian alliance.” Therefore, the status of Persia as a foil rather than an Other hinged upon a presumed affinity with Christianity that was trumpeted by early modern authors.

Looking at the material produced in the wake of the Sherley brothers’ voyage to Persia, Parr’s assertion is surely true. The present work tries to show that it was just one way of perceiving Persia. Multiple discourses about Persia existed in early modern England. One of these discourses saw Persia as a classical empire ruled by great emperors like Cyrus, Darius and Cambyses (as has been shown in a preceding chapter). Another discourse saw Persia in a pragmatic manner as an enemy of Ottoman Turks, like Christian Europe, and as a result, Persia’s wars against the Ottomans were taken as Europe’s wars and Persia seen as fighting on behalf of Christianity. The third kind of discourse, which this part seeks to address, presented Persia as an enemy of Christianity. In such texts, the difference between Ottomans and Persians is obliterated and they both share the same ground as far as their opposition to Christianity is concerned. The Sultan of Persia, as the Persian ruler is called

in such texts, is transformed into the Ottoman Sultan, Persian soldiers become Janissaries, and the ‘Turk’ and the Persian become synonymous. The employment of the term Sultan for the Persian king as opposed to the Sophy that is used in proto-Christian representations of Persia is in itself instructive. Sophy was a term that placed the Persian king squarely in the Christian imagination because of a deep familiarity with the term. It could have reminded early modern readers and auditors of the Greek Sophists, Saint Sophy or Hagia Sophia. This however, does not mean that the Sophy is exclusively used in texts that represent Persia as proto-Christian. In the texts that portray Persia as an enemy of Christians, the Persian ruler could also be called the Sophy and the most glaring example of this trend is found in Thomas Heywood’s *The Four Prentices of London* where a joint force of the Sultan of Babylon and the Persian Sophy fight the crusaders.

The new Islamic identity of Persia in England is heralded by Anthony Munday in his work *Zelauto* (1580). *Zelauto* narrates the story of the adventures of the eponymous protagonist in diverse parts of the world and one section of the story is set in a Persian city, called Zebaia by Munday. The major theme of the part of *Zelauto* dealing with Persia is the significance of showing courtesy to strangers but in the course of the narration Munday attempts to show the plight of the Christian minority living in the Persian city and how Zelauto rescues one Christian convert from being burnt at the stake. There are a few woodcuts in the text and one of them shows a Christian lady bound to the stake while the Sultan of Zebaia looks on. Benedict Robinson has analysed the significance of the stake in the woodcut and through a strategy of double reading asserts that in telling the story of the persecution of a Christian at the hands of Muslim Sultan in Persia, Munday, in fact, critiques violence in the name of religion that was so rampant in contemporary Europe as a result of the Catholic-Protestant divide. “The double reading evoked by *Zelauto*,” observes Robinson, “allows the reader to recognize something “Persian” in the operation of religious violence in England” (Robinson, 2007, 33). Robinson, further commenting on the woodcut where the “Soldane” watches the Christian lady on the stake, compares it with Titian’s 1543 painting of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which quite anachronistically incorporates the figure of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman. “The image of the sultan of Persia watching the execution of Mica’s sister,” observes Benedict Robinson, “recalls the watching Suleiman of Titian’s paintings” (Robinson, 2007, 31). Taking cue from this, I would argue that the

representation of Sultan of Persia in *Zelauto* as a perpetrator of violence against Christians dissolves all the boundaries that separate the Ottomans and the Persians, and Persia emerges as a powerful “Other” to Christian Europe like the Ottomans.

The representation of a Sultan in Persia as a persecutor of Christians evokes some important points. First and foremost is the question of the paradigm shift that is taking place here by presenting a Sultan in Persia as an enemy of Christians instead of the Ottoman Sultans whose record of terrorizing the Christians was considerably better documented in early modern Europe than any persecution of Christians in Persia. Did Munday intentionally leave out the Ottoman Turks from his text because of developing Anglo-Ottoman relations that reached their peak in 1580 with the establishment of official diplomatic relations between England and the Ottoman Porte? What were the possible sources for such an image of Persia? There is a possibility that he drew on continental sources, as he was in Rome a few years before the publication of *Zelauto* and this perception is reinforced by the fact that his hero is an Italian prince.

Another point worthy of note is the presence of a secret Christian community in Zebaia. The fact that they had to hide their beliefs further confirms the state of fear under which the Christian minority had to live in that part of Persia. The treatment meted out to Christians is made obvious when Zelauto enters an inn and to his astonishment finds a Florentine lady as his host. She informs him that “...we are héere subiect vnder a Law, to which Law, wyll we, nyll we, we must obey, the Law dooth thus farre stretch in charge, that no Christian must abide in y<sup>e</sup> Cittie abooue ten days...” (Munday, 1580, 62). The law makes it abundantly clear that Christians are not welcome in the Persian city and those who live there have to suffer the cruelty of the Muslim rulers. The episode dealing with the punishment of the lady who is a close relative of the “Soldane” and who is punished on account of her conversion to Christianity further reinforces the intolerance of Persians towards Christians and as a consequence Persians are equated with Ottomans.

The equating or mingling of the Ottoman and the Persian is evident in a few other places in Munday’s text. Before the beginning of the second part of *Zelauto*, where the adventures of the protagonist are narrated, we find the hero engaged in dialogue with another character named Astraephe. Zelauto informs him that he left for Persia from England by a ship. To

arouse the curiosity of his listener, he adds the following sentence, “But many were the myseries that I poore soule abode among the tyrannous *Turkes*” (52). Straepo’s response to the above statement is also significant: “But durst you séeme to wander so farre as to put your selfe, in hazard of lyfe among those cruell and bloody *Turkes*” (52). The description of “cruell” “bloody” and “tyrannous” “*Turkes*” who live in Persia shows that Persia is fully associated with Islam and Munday is not following the line of his contemporaries who were tactical in undermining or silencing the Muslim identity of Persia, thus presenting her in a favourable light. There are a couple of references to Constantinople in *Zelauto* but Munday has nothing to say about its inhabitants. This further consolidates the perception that Persians and ‘*Turkes*’ were interchangeable terms for Munday. The title of the section is also instructive in this regard. It reads : “Zelauto. His Ariuall in *Persia*, his valiant aduenturing in the defence of a Lady, condempned for her Christianitie, his prosperous Perigrination among the tyrannous *Turkes*, with the rest of his Knightly deedes” (57). The ‘tyrannous *Turkes*’ of the title are none other than the Persians and the epithet ‘*Turke*’ here is employed by Munday in a religious sense and does not mean ‘Ottoman’ as it often does in an early modern context. Thus there were many different types of ‘*Turks*’ who were all Muslims. The three main varieties of “*Turks*” were “Persian *Turks*,” “Ottoman *Turks*” and “Moor *Turks*.” In such a usage of the word ‘*Turk*’, Persian, and Moor become ethnic denominators of people who adhered to the same faith. The Turk Persians or Persian *Turks* in Munday’s text are Muslims who inhabit Persia but are different from Ottomans only in terms of their geographical location.

The spectre of the unity of Muslims played an important political role in early modern England, and Europe at large, to shame the divided Christians. Though a strong sense of differences between the Ottomans and the Persians had already existed in Europe with the emergence of the Safavid Empire in Persia, yet we find a number of texts ignoring this fact. As a result, Persia as an Islamic empire achieves an identity of its own and does not need to be defined against the Ottomans. Thus, in the case of classical Persia and contemporary Persia imbued with a strong Islamic identity, there is no need for Persia to be defined against Ottoman *Turks*. The Persia of the Sophy kings, on the other hand, is almost always defined against the Ottomans, and Persia and Europe became a common enemy for the Ottomans. Persia with a non-specific Islamic identity becomes Europe’s enemy like the

Ottomans and it is here that we cannot consider Persia as just the opposite or the foil, rather it is a strong 'Other' for Christian Europe.

Munday's text rehearses a story common in medieval romances. The bravery and gallantry of the Christian knights against the Saracen hordes is one of the stock themes of romance. Zelauto also performs great deeds of courage in Persia in rescuing Mica's sister from punishment as a result of his successful duel with the son of the "Soldane." Zelauto delivers a speech in-front of the Soldane and his Lords and beseeches him to spare the life of the lady. He tries to embarrass the audiences there by suggesting to the ladies present that if no man was ready to protect the innocent lady; one of them should come forward and try to save her. He offers three choices to the Soldane: first, to forgive her; secondly, if his extreme laws don't permit him the first choice, then he should exile her to another country and thirdly, if none of these is acceptable to him and he "must execute the vttermost of your crueltie," then he says: "Héere am I by force of Armes to defend her quarrell, and against this your Champion will liue and dye in her defence" (84). There are frequent references to the cruelty and tyranny of the "Soldane" though he tries to defend his decision to punish the Christian lady with some arguments. Zelauto is left with no choice but to fight against Terolfo, the Soldane's son. The account of their contest given by Munday is worthy of note:

Then began a valiant and fierce Combat, between Zelauto, and the Soldanes sonne Terolfo, which was so excellently well handled on bothe sides: that it was doubtfull to whome the victorie should fall, but yet at the last, after many fierce assaults, Zelauto kylleth him in the open feeld, and so redeemed the Lady from death...(88)

The fight was "valiant" and "excellently well handled on bothe sides" which shows that Munday wants his readers to acknowledge the military skills of the Persian prince as well. It is in line with the medieval romance concept of presenting the enemy as the "virtuous pagan" as demonstrated by Cindy Vitto and more recently Frank Grady (Vitto, 1989; Grady, 2005); differences of religion did not require the writers to deprive the enemy of their skills. After the murder of his son at the hands of Zelauto, the Soldane spares the lady who was to be punished but he imprisons Zelauto on account of his son's murder. Zelauto is later helped by the secret Christians in Zebaia and he succeeds in escaping from Persia safely and crosses the border to go to Constantinople. The conclusion of the story shows

that Munday has chosen Persia very carefully as a site for describing the plight of Christians. Ottoman Constantinople is shown as a safe haven for Zelauto as compared to the Persian city of Zebaia. Munday's representation of Persia conjures a negative image which runs counter to the images promulgated by a number of other early modern authors at pains to demonstrate the positive Persian difference from the Ottomans in a number of aspects and especially in their treatment of Christians.

Munday, while writing in the medieval romance tradition, uses the term "Champion" for Zelauto as well as Terolfo. It seems that all the works that represent Persia as an Islamic power employ the quintessentially romance terminology of 'Champions.' One prominent example of this trend is found in Richard Johnson's *Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596). The full title of the prose fiction explains who the seven champions were and what they did:

The most famous history of the seauen champions of Christendome Saint George of England, Saint Dennis of Fraunce, Saint Iames of Spaine, Saint Anthonie of Italie, Saint Andrew of Scotland, Saint Patricke of Ireland, and Saint Daud of Wales. Shewing their honorable battailes by sea and land: their tilts, iousts, and turnaments for ladies: their combats vvith giants, monsters, and dragons: their aduentures in forraine nations; their inchauntments in the holie land: their knighthoods, prowess, and chiuallrie, in Europe, Affrica, and Asia, with their victories against the enemies of Christ.

The title shows that the work contains all the building blocks that are necessary for a romance: jousts and tournaments for ladies, fights with monsters and dragons, adventures in far off lands, prowess and chivalry and most importantly, "their victories against the enemies of Christ." This also reveals how far early modern writing was influenced by medieval romance. In the assessment of David Salter, "Nowhere is the influence of medieval romance on Elizabethan literature more apparent than in Richard Johnson's enormously popular prose tale" (Salter, 2003, 6). The same view is held by David Margolies who considers Richard Johnson as "...the most enduringly successful of the commercial writers..." because "...his *Seven Champions of Christendom* was still current as a children's book in the nineteenth century..." (Margolies, 1985, 35). But despite this popularity and the commercial success of *The Seven Champions*, we find very little attention paid to this work in recent scholarship. Salter attributes this lack of attention to an

assessment of the work as devoid of any literary merit which Salter seems to share (6). Naomi Conn Liebler considers the non-availability of the text in a modern spelling edition as one cause of a lack of attention. When Richard Johnson gets any attention from modern scholars, "...he is—at best—damned with faint praise" (Liebler, 2007, 114). Both Salter and Liebler, after showing modern scholarship's disregard for *The Seven Champions*, nevertheless assert the significance of the text in understanding early modern attitudes towards books and book reading.

The central place assigned to St George among the seven champions clearly shows the increasing iconic value he possesses in early modern England. Johnson has naturalized him as the son of an unnamed English King and a resident of Coventry. Jerry Brotton highlights the 'contested' image of St George in the early modern period that was, on the one hand appropriated by both Catholics and Protestants against each other, and on the other was thought to be a link between East and West. Yet another way St George was perceived in early modern texts and iconography was his role as a Christian Knight against Muslims. The Dragon comes to represent Islam in some early modern accounts of St George (Brotton, 2005, 60). The anti-Islamic identity of St George gets fuller expression in Richard Johnson's *Seven Champions* where, according to Brotton, he "is redefined as the iconoclastic Protestant martyr destroying the fictional symbols of Islamic idolatry" (Brotton, 2005, 60). What Brotton does not underscore is that St George's iconoclasm is directed against Persians which reveals the emergence of a new kind of Persian identity in an early modern text.

St. George appears as an important figure in both Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare's history plays. Because of the presence of St George as Red Cross Knight in *The Faerie Queene*, Liebler calls *Seven Champions* a "...working-man's *Faerie Queene*, minus the allegory and the poetry..." (114). The major portion of the first part of *Seven Champions* is devoted to the feats of St George and the three sites chosen by Johnson to exhibit the Christian Champion's valiant deeds are Egypt, Persia and Morocco. Curiously enough, like Anthony Munday's *Zelauto*, Ottomans are not the main enemy that St George has to encounter. Apart from a few references to "Turkish fashion," "Turkish bowes and Darts," and a "Turkish blade," there is only one reference to "Turkish" soldiers, thus giving

very little value to the Ottoman enemy. On the other hand, pitting Persia against the patron saint of England transforms Persia into an enemy of England *par excellence*.

Egypt is the first destination for St George in his eastern travels. The country is shown plagued by a dragon that has terrified the lives of the Egyptians. The Egyptian King had declared that whosoever is courageous enough to combat the dragon and get rid of it will marry his daughter. St George kills the dragon and is hopeful of winning the hand of the Egyptian King's daughter. His hopes are shattered when he discovers that a Moorish king, Almidor, then residing in the Egyptian King's court, craves the love of the Egyptian King's daughter Sabra. Though at first, St George is well entertained at the Egyptian court and Sabra falls in love with him, Almidor eventually succeeds in changing the mind of the Egyptian King about St George on account of St George's successful attempt to convert Sabra. Sabra's—and as a consequence Egypt's—Islamic identity is firmly established when George persuades her to convert to Christianity. When Sabra expresses her feelings of love for the “knight of a strange countrie,” George responds to her in this manner:

There stay (replied the English Champion,) I am a Christian, thou a Pagan: I honour God in heauen, thou earthly shadowes below: therefore if thou wilt obtaine my loue and liking, thou must forsake thy *Mahomet* and bée christned in our Christian faith. (Johnson, 1596, 22)

Sabra readily agrees to his proposal saying thus: “With al my soule (answered the *Egiptian* Lady) will I forsake my country Gods, & for thy loue become a Christian...” (22). The conversion of Saracens entangled in love with Christians is another common motif in medieval romance. This influence is also apparent throughout the text and especially in the oaths of Muslim rulers. When the Egyptian king is informed by Almidore of the conversion of his daughter, he is infuriated and bursts with anger:

Now by *Mahomet*, *Apollo*, and *Termagaunt*, thrée Gods we *Egiptians* commonly ador[e] (sayde the King) this damned Christian shal not gaine the conquest of my daughters loue, for hée shall loose hys head, though not by violence in our *Egiptian* Court... (22-23).

The three gods ascribed to the Egyptian king found their way into Johnson's narrative via medieval romances and the purpose of this was to represent Muslims as idolaters and easily



distinguishable from Christianity. Once Ptolomie, the Egyptian king, turns against St George, he decides to send him to the Sultan of Persia whom he refers to as his “cosen.” He writes a letter to the Sultan explaining to him the dangers of St George and requesting him put to death as soon as George reaches Persia. The King of Egypt’s reason for putting George to death given in the letter gives the same identity to Persia and Egypt in religious terms. St George, according to Egyptian King “is an vtter enemie to all *Asia* and *Affrica*, and a proude contemner of our Religion...” (23). The religion of Persian Sultan and the Egyptian King are further tied together through the agency of three gods that are common to both Egyptians and Persians. Johnson narrates how St George, upon reaching Persia, witnessed their religious rituals of sacrifice “to their Gods *Mahomet*, *Apollo*, *Tirmigaunt*.” This “vnchristian Procession,” as Johnson characterises it, was so much hated by St George that he could not control himself and attacked the procession and trampled the Persian Gods under his feet. Seeing this, the Persians, who are called Pagans rather than Mahometans, rush to their Sultan for help and inform him how St George had “...despised their Mahomet and trampled their banners in dust...” (25). The references to Mahomet here and in the subsequent chapters of the *Seven Champions* conjure an image of Persia that is endowed with a solid idolatrous Muslim identity. This Muslim identity of Persia emerges in opposition to St George, who was a patron saint of England and a national icon. This firmly establishes Persia as an enemy of England as well as Christendom in the English imagination.

The process of creating this new anti-Christian identity for Persia continues in the events next described by Johnson. He narrates how St George encounters one hundred Persian knights sent by the Sultan to arrest him. The Persians, who are called the enemies of Christ, are all murdered by St George and piles of their dead bodies lie around bathed in their blood. Though St George had to yield to the Persians when the whole country stood up against him, he had played havoc with “the enemies of the Christ.” He is presented before the Persian Sultan who pledges to punish him according to the wishes of the Egyptian King and who takes oath on Mahomet, Apollo and Termagaunt to show his commitment to the action. The Persian soldiers are called “Persian Knights” at some points in the narrative, but more interestingly, they are also called “janissaries.” Janissaries constituted an important

military order in the Ottoman army while among Persians there was no such cadre. By mingling Persia and the Ottoman military order, Johnson is trying to convey the idea that there is really no substantial difference between the ‘Turks’ and the Persian, and as the Ottomans were the enemies of Christendom, so were the Persians. This blurring of boundaries between the Ottomans and the Persians is the hallmark of new Persian identity that is anti-Christian, anti-Europe and anti-English as opposed to the anti-Ottoman and anti-Sunni position given them by so many observers of Perso-Ottoman affairs during the early modern period.

The title of Sultan for the Persian, like the Islamic Persian identity, clearly derives from medieval literature such as crusade chronicles and popular romances. The chronicles of the first crusade mention a Sultan of Persia to whom the Saracen ruler of Antioch wrote for help when the city was besieged by the Crusaders. The Seljuk Turks ruled Persia at the time of the first crusade and this association between Persians and ‘Turks’ might have lingered on in the minds of these early modern writers who clearly modeled their texts on medieval romances that emerged in Europe as a result of the early Crusades. This association of Persians and ‘Turks’ is clearly visible in the first crusade *Chronicle of Fulcher of Charters* where the chronicler is narrating events just before laying the siege of Nicea:

We hastened then to the city of Nicea, which Lord Bohemond, Duke Godfrey, Count Raymond, and the Count of Flanders had already surrounded in siege by the Middle of May. The Oriental Turks, very keen archers and bowers, then possessed this city. These Turks from Persia, after they had crossed the Euphrates River fifty years before, subjugated the whole land of Romania for themselves as far as the city of Nicomedia (Peters, 1998, 63).

“These Turks from Persia” clearly shows that in the Middle Ages, ‘Turks’ and Persian were distinct ethnic terms unlike the early modern period, when ‘Turks’ and Persians came to signify both an ethnic identity and a sectarian identity as the Sunni and the Shi’a respectively. The same chronicler also mentions the help received by the ruler of Antioch from the “Sultan of Persia” when the former was besieged by the crusaders:

When the Turks saw that they were besieged by such a great Christian multitude, they feared that they could in no way shake them off. After a plan was mutually formed, Aoxian, prince and emir of Antioch, sent his son, Sensadolus by name, to the

Sultan, that is, the emperor of Persia, to get his help most quickly, since they held hope for aid from no other except Mohammed, their advocate (Peters, 1998, 71-72).

It should not be assumed that Sultan was the only title used for the Persian ruler in medieval romances, however. We have noted one example of the usage of king for the Persian ruler above and it was also a common title for ancient Persian kings such as Cyrus and Darius when they are mentioned in medieval narratives. Another title for the Persian ruler used in *Huon of Bardeaux* is “Admirall.” A part of that romance deals in detail with the adventures of Huon in Persia and Media. Huon stays in Tauris in Persia and the Admiral of Tauris is described as the ruler of Persia. The admiral is represented as a Muslim who is persuaded by Huon to convert to Christianity. The conversion is facilitated by the narration of the miraculous escape of Huon from the “Goulfe of Perse” which showed that Huon’s religion is true. The admiral who is already impressed by Huon’s story is further enticed by the promise made to him that if he agrees to convert, he will be given an apple which when consumed will transform him into a young man of thirty years old. On this the admiral responded:

...yf it be so...what so euer come of me I wyll be chrystenyd and byleue in ye law of Iesu chryst, the fere of dethe shall not let me to do it, for to longe I have byleuyd in this false lawe and detestable of Macomet...(Lee, 1887, 461-62).

After his conversion, the admiral along with Huon succeeds in converting the other lords of Persia to Christianity and they all march towards Angorie to fight against the Saracens.

The significance of this discourse of Persian Muslim identity can be seen in the superimposition of Muslim identity on classical Persia. This trend is evident in the medieval romances and histories of Alexander the Great and his conquest in the Orient. Suzanne Conklin Akbari points to the conflation of classical Persians and medieval Saracens in *Liber Floridus* by Lambert of St Omer and *Roman de toute chevalrie* by Thomas of Kent. In the earlier text, the author forges a connection between the defeats of Darius’ army at the hands of Alexander’s forces with the Frankish victory over the Saracens and their entry into Jerusalem. This conflation is even more apparent in the latter text. According to Akbari:

This typology is even more pronounced in the *Roman de tout Chevalerie*, where Darius' Persians are explicitly identified as "Sarazins" who adore "Apolin" and "Tervagant" two of the three most popular deities in the medieval Saracen pantheon...(Akbari, 2009, 110).

This is the reason that John Gower called Darius "soldanus percie" in *Confessio Amantis* (Gower, 1483, Clxiiij). This anachronistic projection of Persian Muslim identity onto classical Persia was a consequence of the vogue for the Sultan of Persia in medieval narratives.

The Islamic anti-Christian identity of Persia emerges in some other early modern texts that tapped medieval texts or narratives for source material. Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, a Crusade text as the title suggests, is one early modern text that paints Persia in the medieval romance mode as anti-Christian and an ally of other Muslim forces of 'Turks', Moors, Indians, Arabs and Tartars. Tasso's poem was immensely influential in Elizabethan England. The poem was published in Italy in 1581 and it has been suggested by C. P. Brand that the *Liberata* influenced the modeling of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which shows that it was known in England in the original Italian (Brand 1965, 228-38). The popularity of Tasso can also be gauged from the fact that three successive English monarchs from Elizabeth to Charles I had shown an interest in the *Liberata*. Brand mentions that Queen Elizabeth I learnt passages of the poem by heart (Brand, 1965, 226) while James I and Prince Charles were instrumental in the publication of the second edition of Edward Fairfax's translation of *Gerusalemme Liberata* in 1624 and this reprinting was dedicated to Prince Charles (Lea, 1981, 35). Edward Fairfax's complete translation of the *Liberata* was published in 1600 and has been published a number of times since then. There were other renderings of the poem in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which all hint at its popularity in England.

Despite the fact that Tasso's poem was so popular in early modern England, recent studies on Anglo-Islamic relations have not paid much attention to the representation of Islam in Tasso. The only article on the subject that partially addresses Tasso was published prior to the current resurgence in Anglo-Islamic studies (Donnelly, 1977). Nabil Matar and Daniel Vitkus, however, underscore the significance of the poem in the context of early modern

discourse on Muslims. Matar calls Tasso's epic as "...the most influential Renaissance poem about the Crusades..." (Matar, 1999, 143) and contextualizes its appearance in England with late Elizabethan appeals for a crusade against Muslims which are epitomized in Thomas Heywood's play *The Four Prentices of London* (to which I will turn shortly). Daniel Vitkus, on the other hand, compares the crusading project of the poem to that of Tamburlaine's conquests as depicted in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine I & II*. According to Vitkus:

The imaginative geography of the *Tamburlaine* plays is much like that of early modern romance narratives by Tasso, Ariosto, and others...The setting and the order of events are almost identical. The crusaders in Tasso's poem combat the same Muslim enemies in the same orders: first, the Persians, then the Turks, then the Egyptians, and finally they attack Jerusalem (Vitkus, 2003, 62).

Vitkus further elucidates the comparative features of the *Tamburlaine* plays and Tasso's poem but he has not counted one of the most significant points of comparison in the two texts: the figure of Altamor in Tasso's poem, who represents the historical Timur and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. Tasso's Altamor is diametrically opposed to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and reveals how multiple discourses about oriental figures were operating in early modern Europe.

Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* is a counter-Reformation text. The fissure and rupture that developed in early modern Europe as a result of the Reformation was a great source of anxiety for early modern Christians. The anxiety was compounded by the presence of the Ottoman threat in the east, and in these circumstances Catholics called for unity among Christians in order to defend against the Ottoman threat and to further enhance the anxiety overlooked division in the house of Islam. Thus, magnifying the Ottoman or larger Muslim threat to Christians allowed the polemicists to exhort diverging Christians to come together. Similarly, Tasso suppresses any reference to dissension among Muslims in his poem as it would have reflected a weaker Muslim enemy.

The Muslim enemy of the crusaders in Tasso's poem consists of various nationalities and ethnicities. They are Arabs, Africans, Turks and Persians and they come from all parts of the early modern Muslim world. Joining Persians with the other Muslims is evidence of

continuity between medieval and early modern perceptions of Persia where Islam becomes the most important defining element of Persian identity and consequently all the differences between Persia and Ottoman Turkey collapse and the identity of both becomes almost indistinguishable. The first mention of Persia in the poem is found quite early when Tasso relates the crusaders' victory in Nicea and Antioch:

Nice by assault, and Antioch by surprise,  
Both faire, both rich, both wonne, both conquer'd stand,  
And this defended they in noblest wize  
Gainst Persian knights and many a valiant band,  
(Lea, 1981, I, 6)

The Christian victory over "Persian knights" in Antioch is mentioned in Canto VIII and the Persian leader here is referred to as "Corbana." A Christian knight, Astragor, marvels at "How Antioch was wonne...And how defended nobly afterward" (VIII. 8). In the next stanza, Tasso explains who Antioch was defended from:

Defended gainst Corbana valiant knight,  
That all the Persian armies had to guide,  
And brought so many soldiers bold to fight,  
That void of men he left that kingdome wide,  
(VIII. 9)

Corbana or Corban who is killed by Dudon in III. 44 is mentioned in narratives of the first Crusade. For example, in a letter by Anslem of Ribemont written to Manassess, Archbishop of Reims in July 1098, he is called "chief of the army of the king of Persians" (Krey, 1921, 160). The defeat of the Persian military commander also inspired an engraving by Gregorio Pagani which appeared in a book published in Florence in 1589 (see Figure 3) (Gualterotti, 1589, 88). The difference between Pagani's engraving and Tasso's description of the Persians' defeat is that whereas Corbana is killed by a minor lord in Tasso's poem, in the engraving, it is the greatest protagonist of the first crusade Godfrey himself who puts him to death. These texts were enough to remind their consumers of the role Persia played against Christians in the past and it could have influenced early modern perceptions of contemporary Persia.

What is significant in Tasso's references to Persia is that, unlike the medieval narratives of the First Crusade, there is no Sultan of Persia in the poem. Sultan, on the other hand, is used for the 'Turk' ruler of Nicea, whose name is transcribed as Solimano and is conflated with Soldano throughout the poem. In stanza 46 of the Canto I we find another reference to Christian-Persian encounter in which Christians emerged victorious as their "...swordes with Persian blood were dide" ( I. 46). This leaves no doubt about the enmity of Christians and Persians. Tasso does not only present Persians as the enemy of Christians, but on a number of occasions he conflates 'Turks' and Persians as well as other Muslims to create a joint force of Muslims. One such occasion is in the speech of Alete, an Egyptian emissary to Godfrey in the company of Aragantes. He asks Godfrey:

Tell me, if great in counsell, armes and gold,  
The Prince of Egypt, war gainst you prepare?  
What if the valiant Turkes and Persians bold,  
Vnite their forces with Cassanoes haire?  
O then, what marble pillar shall vphold  
The falling trophies of your conquests faire?  
(II. 71)

Egyptians, Persians, 'Turkes' and Cassanoes' son are declared as the four major enemies of the crusaders. Though Egyptians, Turks and Persians play an important role in defending Jerusalem against the Christians, the references to "Cassanoes haire" is the only reference to this character in the whole text and though it is difficult to ascertain which historical figure Tasso meant from this, it may refer to Usumcasan of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* who was an ally of the protagonist in the two part play. If Cassanoe in "Cassanoes haire" is the Persian king Uzun Hasan, it also reminds us of a reference to "Tonombey, Usancassno's son" (Scene 27, l. 26) in Greene's *Selimus* (Vitkus, 2000). This shows how Tasso and Greene might have used the same sources about the Muslim Orient. The Egyptian ambassador Alete once again points out the possibility of anti-Christian alliance between 'Turks' and Persians on the one hand and Egyptians on the other, an inverse from of the strategy worked upon by Christians against the Ottomans in the early sixteenth century and later revived by the Sherley brothers.

Islam was not only a military threat for Tasso's crusaders but also a sexual one. The Crusaders had to defend themselves against Muslim soldiers as well as Muslim seductresses. Three important female characters in the poem are shown to be Muslims and they are Armida, Clorinda and Erminia. Armida is said to be the niece of the ruler of Damascus and Erminia is the daughter of the ousted king of Antioch, but Clorinda's origin is a more difficult issue. In his recent translation of the poem, Max Wickett describes her in the Glossary as "Muslim maiden warrior, white-skinned daughter of the king of Ethiopia..." (Tasso, 2009, 441). The first reference to Clorinda in the poem calls her "A Pagan damsel...her visage faire..." (I. 47) while in the next Canto, we get more information about her:

This lustie Ladie came from Persia late,  
 She with the Christians had encountered eft,  
 And in their flesh had opened many a gate  
 By which their faithfull soules their bodies left,  
(II. 41)

There is no explanation in the poem as to why she comes from Persia. There is a probability that Tasso bestows upon her a dual identity, although to be "white-skinned" and Persian is more probable than to be "white-skinned daughter of the king of Ethiopia." Regardless of her ethnicity, Clorinda's arrival from Persia and her encounters with Christians in which she kills many of them reinforces Persia's anti-Christian image.

The most significant episode involving Persia in the poem is in the last canto. This episode makes Tasso's poem radically different from the other narratives that represent Persians as anti-Christian. Anthony Munday's *Zelauto* and Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* present an image of Persia which is entrenched in the past and is difficult to relate to the contemporary situation. Instead, Tasso's account turns classical, medieval and Safavid Persia into anti-Christian Persia.

The final confrontation between the crusaders and Muslims starts with the blowing of trumpets. The first Muslim casualty is the "king of Orms, Hircano" (XX. 32) at the hands of female crusader Gildippes. Next, she kills two other Persians named "Zopire" and "Alarcos" (XX. 33). The climax arrives in the next stanza:



A blow feld Artaxerxes, with a thrust  
Was Argeus slaine, the first lay in a trance,  
Ismaels left hand cut off fell in the dust;  
For on his wrest her sword fell down by chance:  
The hand let go the bridle where it lust,  
The blow vpon the coursers eares did glance,  
Who felt the raines at large, and with the stroake  
Half mad, the ranks disordered, troubled, broake:  
(XX. 34)

The most important word from our perspective here is the proper name Ismael. According to Max Wickett, Ismael is just a “Persian warrior” (447). The other significant proper name is “Artaxerxes” which he again considers simply a “Persian warrior” (439). This is a gross injustice both to Tasso and to the Persians. Artaxerxes is the proper name of a number of ancient Persian kings, while Ismael was the founder of the Safavid dynasty. By mentioning an ancient and an early modern Persian king together against the crusaders, Tasso is doing the same trick that Gower did by naming Darius as the Sultan of Persia: projecting the Islamic identity of Persia onto ancient Persia.

How do we know that Ismael in the above stanza is the same as Shah Ismail Safavi? This becomes clear when we read the lines following Ismail's name. The details of how he lost control of his horse and how the horse trampled his own rank and file has a close analogy in the accounts of the Battle of Chaldiran fought between him and the Ottoman ruler Selim I. The accounts of the battle mention that Ismail's left arm was wounded (Hasan, 2002). Tasso has, however, modified the story by suggesting that the horse got out of control because Ismail's left hand was cut and his control of the reins lost while the original accounts of the battle attribute this to the noise of canons used by the Ottoman against the Persian cavalry (Geuffroy, 1542, Cxxxvii-Cxviii).

Bringing Shah Ismail into focus as anti-Christian and anti-Crusader gives a whole new twist to Persian identity in early modern England. The Sultan of Persia might have been anti-Christian but no Sultan ruled in Persia at the time people started reading Tasso's poem in England. It was rather the "Sophy," a title which evoked many positive associations in the English/Christian mind, as has already been mentioned. But Tasso's poem, along with Thomas Heywood's *Four Prentices of London* struck a blow to efforts to present the

Persian Sophy in a positive light. Heywood even went a step further. While Tasso had a single mention of Ismail in his poem, Heywood chose “Sophy, the King of Persia” as an ally of the Sultan of Babylon against the crusaders.

Different dates for the performance of the *Four Prentices* have been suggested by scholars of early modern theatre. When the play was published in 1615, Heywood stated that the play was “written many years since, in my Infancy of Iudgment in this kind of Poetry and my first practice...” (Heywood, 1964, “Epistle”). This however does not allow us to attach a specific year to the performance of the play. Charles A. Rouse discusses the two probable dates worked out by scholars. In his words: “*The Four Prentices of London*, according to Greg is the same play as *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, which was performed as new on July 19, 1594, while Chambers suggests that it may be identical with *Jerusalem*, acted for Henslow on March 22, 1592” (Rouse, 1930, 788).

Mary Ann Weber Gasior, a modern editor of *The Four Prentices*, offers a compromise between the two dates of the play by suggesting that the play may have been written as early as 1592, was registered in 1594 but not published until 1615 (Quoted in Shapiro, 1996, 257). R. A. Foakes, in his essay on playhouses and players in early modern England also skeptically endorses 1594 as the date of the first performance of the play in the Rose theatre while a few pages earlier in the same essay, he mentions 1600 as the year of performance in Fortune theatre (Foakes, 2003, 17, 20). The overwhelming opinion seems to favour 1594 and it is significant also in view of the large number of plays on Muslims in 1590s in the wake of the “Tamburlaine phenomenon” a term coined by Thomas Cartelli to refer to the impact of Malowe’s Tamburlaine plays on the subsequent theatre (Cartelli, 1991).

Generically, the play has been classified variously. Samuel C. Chew, in his monumental book, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* (1937) calls the play the only surviving crusade play from the period (Chew, 1937). The adventures of the four apprentices in far off lands and their chivalric deeds against their enemies make a strong case for the play to be categorized as a romance. Susan Zimmerman, however, considers the play not a pure romance but a “domestic romance” because of the fact that it

is also closely linked to the city of London and may possibly be taken as “city comedy” (Zimmerman, 1992, 138). Jonathan Burton classifies it as an ‘Heroic Romance’ (Burton, 2005, 257) while for Mark Hutchings, it is a “Turk” play (Hutchings, 2007). From the perspective of this thesis, the play, as I have argued for other plays featuring classical Persian kings, is a Persian play. Though Tamburlaine is fashioned as a Persian king by Marlowe in his two part play, and a Persian Shah appeared as a character in now lost I & II *Timar Cham*, *The Foure Prentices* is the first extant play from early modern England that represents a contemporary Persian king (Safavid) as one of its major characters.

The uniqueness of Heywood’s play lies in the fact that, unlike most other plays of the period, there are no Ottoman Turks in the play. The absence of the Ottomans from this play and Munday’s *Zelauto* as well as Richard Johnson’s *Seven Champions*, reveals the unsuitability of the Ottomans for the romance mode as they were too familiar and too immediate to fit into this mode. Secondly, there is a possibility that this attention away from the Ottomans was a political gesture by authors who tried to introduce a discursive shift in the representation of Muslims in early modern English culture, over-obsessed with the Ottomans. Finally, the overwhelming presence of the Ottomans in early modern dramatic and non-dramatic texts might have resulted in a clichéd, and hence monotonous image of the ‘Turk’. Heywood and others who explored new materials to construct their texts might have responded to a need for something new and different. Whatever the reason for the absence of the Ottomans in his play, this was surely a new discourse, or rather a counter-discourse, regarding Persia that was mostly seen as a Christian-friendly state in early modern England on account of their wars against the Ottomans. In opposition, Heywood painted Persia as an anti-Christian state and an ally of the Sultan.

The absence of the Ottomans from the play can be seen in another way. While in the “Drammatis Personae” the Sultan is said to be “The Soldane of Babylon” in the rest of the play, he is remembered just as “Soldane” and no geographical association is attached to him. The title “Sultan” and his anti-Christianity would instantly remind the playgoers of the Ottoman sultans who were the subject of so many publications and performances in the same period. When the Sophy becomes the ally of the Sultan in the play, the Persian becomes one with the Ottoman and all difference between them is collapsed.

What distinguishes Heywood's play from the other texts discussed above is the use of the title of Sophy for the Persian king rather than the Sultan as in Munday and Johnson. Heywood is very clever in exploiting his sources. While he might have learnt about the Persian role in the first crusade from medieval narratives, he has transported the Islamic identity of Persia to contemporary Safavid Persia by allying the Sophy with the Sultan. The reference to Shah Ismail in Tasso and to the Sophy in Heywood leave no doubt that late sixteenth century Persia was no different from Persia of the medieval narratives whose character was essentially Islamic and anti-Christian. This also shows that the early modern Sophy of Persia is an extension of the medieval Sultan of Persia.

Apart from the two titles—the Sophy and the Soldane – for the Muslim enemies of the crusaders, there is nothing Islamic in the play. Unlike Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, there are no references to "Mahomet" or the "Alchoran." Unlike the three other texts dealt with in this chapter, there are not even any references to the medieval pantheon of Saracen deities "Mahound, Termagaunt, Apollo." In line with the other Persian plays, we find mentions of "Persian gods" (in plural) while the Christian deity is a singular God. The most recurrent words to describe the enemies of the crusaders are "pagans" "heathens" and "infidels." Jove is the deity that is mentioned by the Persian Sophy in his speeches. When the Soldan tells him of the imminent Christian threat, the Sophy describes himself as "Joues great Vicegerent ouer all the world" (Heywood, 1964, 206) and then exhorts his friends to confront the proud Christians. This reminds us of the frequent invocations of Jove in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays. At another point, he likens his sword to the "bolt of Ioue" (Heywood, 1964, 218). Godfrey, while speaking to the Soldan and the Sophy narrates a story from Roman mythology and tells them of "...the heathen God, whom you call Ioue" (Heywood, 1964, 231), reinforcing the image of Muslims as pagans. The paganization of Muslims, apart from being a medieval vision, easily justifies their removal from the holy land. In case of Persians, it is also the familiar technique of anachronistically mixing the present and the past, creating a hybrid image of Persia as a mixture of Islamic and pagan ideologies. Sometimes the past is brought forth to the present as is the case in this play and at other times the present is projected back into the past, turning Darius into a Sultan or Artaxerxes into a companion of Ismail as we find in Tasso.

The Reformation and the resultant division of Christianity into Catholic and Protestant sects and the anxiety that it created is clearly evident in the play. The fracture in Christendom is symbolized through the conflicts between the Christian characters. There are a series of incidents before the real encounter between Christians and Muslims in which Christian characters prepare to fight each other but they are stopped by a third character in order to bring them together to fight against the “Pagans” and restore Jerusalem to the Christians. One instance of this is found in the conflict between two of the four brothers, Charles and Eustace. Both admired Bella Franca, and were about to start fighting against each other when the Clown stopped them, saying:

What doe you meane Gentlemen to fight among your selues, that should be friends,  
and had more need to take one anothers part. To fight against your enemies. We  
shall all be slaine, kil'd murdered, Massacred (Heywood, 1964, 191).

This is an appeal to Christians to mend their way and become friends, otherwise, their existence is in danger.

A similar example comes a little later when Tancred, an Italian prince, comes to fight against the Foresters. Here Charles plays the role earlier performed by the Clown. He asks him:

Why come the County Palatine in Armes  
To fight against vnarmed Forresters?  
If thou wilt winne renowne, bend thy braue forces  
Gainst Pagans that besiege *Hierusalem*.  
(Heywood, 1964, 194)

An episode in the play between the other two brothers, Godfrey and Guy, further elucidates the problems faced by the Christians because of their internal strife. Through the mirror of brotherhood, Heywood wants to show that Catholics and Protestants are brothers and they should not fight against each other. In the case of these two brothers, Robert of Normandy comes forward to halt their encounter, persuading them not to “bend their swords against their mutuall breasts/ Whose edge were sharpned for their enemies crests” (Heywood, 1964, 196). The following lines, if read out of context, might easily refer to Catholic-Protestant enmity and an exhortation to end it in the name of Christ:

...I charge you Princes both  
 T'abandon this iniurious enmity.  
 Stand you betwixt them Souldiers, lest this sting  
 Of blind sedition, raign in this our Army  
 And feed vpon our bodies like a plague.  
 Princes I charge you by your Sauours bloud  
 Shed for your sinnes, ye shed none at this time.  
 (Heywood, 1964, 197)

Through all these incidents, Heywood has achieved an “imagined unity” among Christians and this is expressed by Robert before all of them leave for the Holy Land: “Princes and Lords, let our vnited bands/ Win backe Iudea from the Pagans hands” (Heywood, 1964, 204).

Heywood does not only show that Christians are aware of their disunity but also reveals that their enemies, the Muslims, acknowledge the importance of unity against the Christians. This is the only time when the playwright offers a hint of differences among Muslims. The Soldan and the Persian Sophy develop a difference of opinion on how to deal with the oncoming Christians and their companions Turnus and Morates have the same divided opinion. Seeing this, the Soldan says:

Stay Lords, our graue experience doth foresee  
 The mischiefs that attend on this debate  
 We tread the path of our destruction,  
 By our dissentions grow the Christians strong,  
 Whom our vnited hearts may easily quell:  
 (Heywood, 1964, 207)

Heywood may well have the Shi'a-Sunni differences in his mind here, as most early modern accounts concerning the Persian Sophy had some kind of reference to the differences between the Ottomans and the Persians. There is also some evidence that Heywood was aware of the division in Islam and he was of the view that all divisions in the world resulted from difference of opinion. In a later work, according to Heywood, opinion,

...breedes the Athiestes skorne, the Christians feare,  
 The Arrians error, Pagans misbelieve,  
 This makes the Turke his Alcoran to heare,  
 Breed in the bold, presumption, penitent, grieve:  
 This made the Iewes their Saviour Christ forswear,

Despising him, choose Barrabas the Theefe:  
 Hence came the Persian Haly (long ago)  
 Diffing from him the sect of Praester-Iohn  
 (Heywood, 1609, 89)

In another later work, Heywood further displays his knowledge of the sectarian division in Islam by mentioning Prophet Muhammad and his son-in-law and cousin Ali side by side just as Dante presented them in his *Divine Comedy*:

All sad disasters flie beyond those seas  
 That ebb and flow unto th' Antipodes.  
 Or if they chance to linger by the way,  
 May they with Mahomet, and Ali stay  
 (Heywood, 1637, 235)

This shows that when Heywood composed his play, he was aware of the differences between the Ottomans and the Persians but that he chose not to fully express these ideas in the *Four Prentices*.

The case for the “imagined unity” in the play or the hoped for unity in reality would have been spoiled by showing the Muslim enemy as divided. Heywood, therefore shows both crusaders and Muslims as united in their ranks. The best expression of this unity on both sides is found in speeches by the Soldan and the Sophy representing the Muslims and Robert representing the Christians. When the Soldan and Robert come face to face for the final encounter, the Soldan speaks thus:

From Ganges to the Bay of Calecut,  
 From Turkey and the three-fold Araby:  
 From Sauxin Eastward vnto Nubia's bounds,  
 From Lybia and the land of Mauritan,  
 And from the Red Sea to the wildernsse,  
 Haue we vnpeopled Kingdomes for these wars,  
 To be reueng'd on you base Christians  
 (Heywood, 1964, 243)

We are reminded of Marlowe's map in the *Tamburlaine* plays. Heywood may have similarly written these lines observing an early modern map for the lands that were not Christian and assigned India, Africa and the Middle East to Islam.

Robert's response is also revealing. He tells his enemies that his military power is comprised of soldiers from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France and Spain. While the Soldan had mentioned countries in his speech, the Persian Sophy mentions the ethnicities that make up the anti-Christian force. The anti-crusading force is made up of Moors, Babylonians, Persians, Bactrians, Grecians, Russians, Tartarians and Turks. As Christians of both Protestant and Catholic denominations are shown fighting together for the recovery of Jerusalem, Muslims of all colours and sectarian denominations join together to resist the crusaders. The anxiety and the fear emanating from sectarian division is overcome by representing an imagined unity in both Muslims and Christians that was in reality non-existent. By portraying Muslims as united, Heywood exhorts Christians to behave in the same manner and shed their differences rather than each others' blood. He achieved this through combining the Sultan and the Sophy against the Christians. The Sultan and the Sophy symbolize the Sunni and the Shi'i sects and as Heywood presents the Sophy as young and the Sultan as old, one wonders whether the playwright was suggesting the recent revival of Shi'i thought among Muslims. The whole discourse of dissention and unity in the play is thus contextualized against the backdrop of ruptured Christianity and a slight awareness of ruptured Islam. Heywood, unlike others, did not opt for trumpeting the division in Islam—his outlook, as a result, seems to be coloured by Catholic ideas.

This chapter reveals the complexity of Persia in the early modern English imagination. While some Elizabethan writers and playwrights were exploiting classical Persian themes, others were interested in understanding the dynamics of difference between Ottomans and Persians and the nature of schism within Islam. Some however, as demonstrated in this chapter, were trying to avoid any reference to schism in Islam as it seemed to justify schism in Christianity. The whole purpose in showing Muslims as a united band against the Christians was to exhort early modern Christians to be united and shun their differences. In this way, there is a strong similarity between these texts and those that narrate the differences between the 'Turks' and the Persians. Through narrating the differences between two Muslim powers, authors such as Minadoi and Foxe emphasize the harmfulness of the differences as they cause wars and other conflicts. Hence, the necessity of unity among Christians is the moral of the whole story. Similarly, Romance texts



perform the same function through avoiding any reference to any schismatic differences among Muslims and representing the Muslim as a 'model' for Christians to follow. Persia, whether anti-Ottoman or anti-Christian, was carefully employed by early modern English authors to press home a powerful message of unity to their readers.

## Chapter 5

### **‘Great Sherley’s Church’: Travel, Drama and Anglo-Persian Encounters in the Early Modern Period**

The mission of the Sherley Brothers to Persia at the end of the sixteenth century is one of the most significant episodes in the history of Anglo-Persian relations. However, they were not the first Englishmen in Persia. The first recorded Englishman to visit Persia was Sir Geoffery de Langley who reached Persia in 1290 as an envoy of Edward I “to seek the Mongol King Arghun’s aid against the Turks” (Wright, 2001, 2). The purpose of de Langley’s and the Sherley Brothers’ visit was the same, though a period of three hundred years separates them. This illustrates the nature of the Ottoman threat faced by Europeans over these centuries. Apart from these Englishmen, there were scores of other Europeans who visited Persia for different purposes (Lockhart, 1986; Wilson, 1925). Laurence Lockhart categorizes the European visitor to Persia into four groups: first, the visitors with a religious intent to convert Persians to Christianity; second, visitors who went with a mission to exhort the Persians to ally with the Christians in Europe to destroy Ottoman power; third, visitors who were moved by commercial interest, and finally, those who passed through Persia to or from India and beyond (Lockhart, 1986, 374-5). Lockhart’s categorization is to a great extent accurate, nevertheless, we find that the Sherley Brothers were motivated by a mixture of the first three reasons. The most obvious reason for their journey to Persia was to bind Persians and Christians together in a bid to launch a joint attack against the Ottomans. When they were unable to sell this idea to European Christian monarchs, this approach took the shape of a mercantile strategy whereby they wanted to divert Persian trade around the Ottoman Empire to some other overland or maritime route (Matthee, 1994; Matthee, 1999). And in pursuing these two objectives, there was an underlying assumption that Persian anti-Ottomanism had something to do with their inclination towards Christianity. In this way, the Sherley Brothers represent the collective experience of Perso-European encounters from 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The significance of the Sherley Brothers in Anglo-Persian encounters is evident from the amount of scholarly attention they received in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The trend was set by E. P. Shirley with his *The Sherley Brothers, An Historical Memoir of the Lives of Sir Thomas*

*Sherley, Sir Anthony Sherley and Sir Robert Sherley Knights* (1848). The author, who himself belonged to the same family, gathered almost all the documents relating to these three brothers from the national archives of Britain to construct a picture of the activities of the Sherley Brothers and is an indispensable source for primary material on the brothers. Three important books on the Sherley brothers appeared over the course of 20<sup>th</sup> century which investigated their role in sixteenth and seventeenth century politics from different angles. Sir Denison Ross was the first scholar to devote a book to one of the Sherley Brothers in the Broadway Travellers Series, titled *Sir Anthony Sherley and His Persian Adventure* (1933). The major part of the book comprises of narratives of Anthony and Robert's voyages to Persia which made some primary sources available to a modern readership. The second was penned by Boies Penrose and is titled *The Sherleian odyssey: being of the travels and adventures of three famous brothers during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I* (1938). The book deals with the adventures of the Sherley Brothers in historical perspective, and coincided with the publication of Samuel C. Chew's *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* (1937) that highlighted the impact of the Sherley Brothers on early modern literature. The third book appeared some three decades after the second and was titled *Elizabethans Errant: the Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and his Three Sons* (1967). D. W. Davies, the author, has comprehensively dealt with the history of the Sherley brothers, their activities on the continent and the East, concluding with their last days. Apart from these books, a great number of works on Persian history and East-West relations make a point of mentioning Anthony and Robert Sherley and their role in Perso-European relations.

Between Robert Brancetour and the Sherleys, there is another phase of Anglo-Persian relations that started in the early reign of Elizabeth in 1562 and continued for almost two decades. The most important figure associated with this initiative was Anthony Jenkinson, an agent of the Muscovy Company with a wide experience of travelling in eastern lands. It was Richard Eden, the forerunner of Richard Hakluyt, who collected the accounts of English traders to Persia which were included in the collection of travels published by Richard Willes in 1577 under the title *The history of trauayle in the VWest and East Indies*. Eden, apart from collecting the Muscovy company traders' reports on Persian affairs, displays great acumen in understanding the 'positive' role Persia could play in saving

Christendom from the Ottoman threat. Eden published a translation of Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's history of the new world in 1555. Towards the end of his address "To the Reader" he suggests the best way to deal with the Ottoman menace:

...there can nothyng be imagined more effectuall for the confusion of the Turke if the great Cham of Cathay and the Sophie of Persia on the one syde, and the Christian Princes on the other syde, should with one consent inuade his dominions, as did Tamburlanes, the emperoure of the Tartars (Anghiera, 1555, D3r).

It shows that the idea of an engagement with Persia was known in England even before Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne. As Kenneth Andrews mentions Eden's connection with the Muscovy Company, there is a probability that he had some role to play in the company's plans for the Persian trade, keeping in view the above comment (Andrews, 1984, 69).

Though Eden is mostly remembered for his contribution to the publication of some of the earliest books on America (Arber, 1885) as well as his translation of Martin Cortes's navigational manual, he is hardly known for his role in collecting and translating accounts of the old world. A brief account of Jenkinson's visit to the Persian Sophy was published in Eden's collection in 1577 and later a fuller version was published by Richard Hakluyt in the first edition of his *Principal Navigations* in 1589. Eden did not include any letters from the Queen to the Persian Sophy which Hakluyt later did. The accounts of Persian religion and society written by Geoffrey Ducket and Arthur Edward are printed in Hakluyt's 1589 edition without ever mentioning Richard Eden's name as the original collector of those accounts. Ducket's account in Eden's collection has the following title which clearly shows that he solicited the information from Ducket:

Here foloweth such informations as was gyuen mee by maister Geferie Ducate, principall Agent of the merchante, for the last voyage into *Persia*, in the yeere of our Lord· 1568. beginning in the dominion of the Sophie, at the citie of *Shamaki* in *Media* (Anghiera, 1577, 343).

Hakluyt's heading is changed to "Further Observations concerning the state of Persia...by Ieffrey Ducket" (Hakluyt, 1589, 422) without any acknowledgement that this had already been published more than a decade earlier.

Ducket's account, along with Jenkinson's brief comments on the Persian religion, is the first English introduction to sectarian division in Islam. But this was not the only source of information on the issue in early modern England. We find some detail of the sectarian differences in Islam in the travel narrative of an Italian traveler, Ludovico de Varthema, who wandered in the Orient for a few years in the early sixteenth century is famous as one of the first Europeans to visit the holy sites of Islam in Arabia and has left a unique account of Muslim pilgrimage, the Hajj. Varthema's travel narrative was translated into English by Richard Eden and was printed in 1577. What is significant in Varthema's detail of the schism in Islam is that his information is not based on Ottoman-Safavid rivalry which was the usual source of such information, though he eventually refers to the schism as the major cause of wars between the Ottomans and the Persians. Varthema's story of Muslim schism unfolds in the context of his visit to the "Sepulchre of Mahumet, and of his felowes" in Madinah. He mentions "Mahumet and his felowes...which are...Nabi, Bubacar, Othomar, Aumar, and Fatoma" buried in the sepulcher of the Prophet. This is a reference to the three successors of the Prophet Muhammad beside his daughter Fatima, the wife of the fourth successor Ali. Varthema further mentions "Hali" and we find an interesting marginal note on his name which reads: "This Hali, our men that have been in Persia, call Mortus Hali, that is Saint Hali" (Anghiera, 1577, 363). This reveals how Eden was synthesizing the information about Persia that he collected from different sources. Varthema is not very precise about the nature of difference in early Islam but he seems to have a vague idea that it emerged quite early. About the successors of the Prophet, he says:

Euery of these haue their proper bookes of theyr factes and traditions. And hereof proceedeth the great dissention and discorde of religion and maners among this kynde of filthie men, whyle some confirme one doctrine, and some an other, by reason of theyr diuers sectes of patrons, Doctours, and saintes, as they call them (Anghiera, 1577, 363).

The appearance of this passage in England in 1577 could have suggested a situation in Islam comparable to Christianity that had also undergone a "great dissention and discorde of religion" in the previous decades.

Varthema suggests that the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians were the result of sectarian differences. He mentions "mortall hatred" and wars between them on this account

but nevertheless, he makes it clear that both were “Mahumetans.” He discusses the sectarian difference once again when he describes his visit to Persia in the third book of his travel narrative. Here Varthema states the difference more clearly. He planned to go to a city he calls “Sainct Bragant” from Persia but he could not because of the wars between the Persians and the people of “Sainct Bragant” by which he meant the famous Central Asian city Samarkand (Temple, 1863, xxi). These were the wars that the “the *Sophie* then made agaynst those *Mahumetans*, which are of the sect and religion of *Bubachar*, *Othomar*, & *Omar*” (Anghiera, 1577, 380). By “Bubachar, Othomar, & Omar,” he means the first three successors of the Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr, Umar and Usman and tells his readers that the Persians “abhorre these as heretikes and false doctors.” Nevertheless, Persians are also “Mahumetans of an other secte whiche is of Mahumet and *Hali*” (Anghiera, 1577, 381). Varthema’s understanding of schism in Islam differs from others who sometime see the schism in Islam as a conflict between Muhammad and Ali as two rival “prophets.” Varthema presents Prophet Muhammad and his son-in law Ali in one camp and the three successors of the Prophet Muhammad in the other, which perfectly captures the way Persians seem to understand Islam.

Anthony Jenkinson’s account of his visit to Persia which is included in Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* is an important document for the study of Anglo-Persian relations in early modern England. It is through his narrative that we first come across a multi-faceted image of Persia which reveals a dual nature to the Safavid’s relations with the Ottoman Turks. Jenkinson’s visit was also important in the sense that it laid the foundation for formal relations between England and Persia since in 1561 he carried a letter from Queen Elizabeth to the Persian ruler Shah Tahmasp. Jenkinson is an important English traveller whose contribution in opening up English trade with the East is not easy to ignore. Prior to his visit to Persia, he had been to Moscow and further east to Bukhara to explore opportunities for English trade. He was in Aleppo in 1553 and witnessed Sultan Suleyman’s entry into that city. According to Nabil Matar, Jenkinson is the first Briton to visit the Ottoman Empire (Matar, 1998, 5). While in Aleppo, Jenkinson had been able to see the Ottoman Sultan and had acquired permission from him to trade in the Ottoman lands. It seems that nothing came out of this permission as the English traders kept on

exploring new avenues for trade and did not show further interest in the Ottoman trade until the late 1570s when formal diplomatic contact was established.

Jenkinson was chosen by the Governors of the Muscovy Company to proceed to Persia with detailed instructions. He was also carrying letters to the Russian Emperor as well as the Persian Sophy from Queen Elizabeth. Jenkinson is called “our faithful servant” in the letter addressed to the Emperor of Russia while in the letter to the Persian King, he is introduced as “our faithfull, and right wellbeloved servant” which shows his importance to company and crown. Queen Elizabeth’s letter to the Persian King is the first of its kind in the sixteenth century and perhaps one of the first English letters to any non-European, non-Christian ruler. Since there was very little official interaction between England and Persia at the time when it was being drafted in April 1561, it is revealing to note how much the English conceived contemporary Persia as a continuation of classical Persia. The letter begins:

ELIZABETH, by the grace of God, Queene of England, &c. To the right mightie, and right victorious Prince, the great Sophie, Emperour of the Persians, Medes, Parthians, Hircans, Caramanians, Margians, of the people on this side, and beyond the river of Tygris, and of all men, and nations, betweene the Caspian sea, and the gulfes of Persia, greeting, and most happie increase in all prosperitie (Hakluyt, 1589, 362).

The excerpt shows how early Elizabethan court officials’ perception of Safavid Persia was influenced by classical as well as Biblical sources in their mention of Media and Parthia. As a result of strong humanist interest in classical Greco-Roman civilization during the Renaissance, early modern Englishmen also learnt about other classical civilizations of the time, specifically Persia, as discussed earlier. This, in turn, led to a vogue for plays based on classical Persian themes in early years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The description of Queen Elizabeth is brief when compared to the Persian King whose might and greatness is emphasized and demonstrated through the references to large number of regions under his control. This perception of the greatness of the Persian “Empire” could not pass the test of time. This is evident from another letter of Elizabeth to the Persian King some eighteen years later which was given to a group of Muscovy Company agents who proceeded to Persia in 1579. The beginning of the letter is quoted below:

ELIZABETH by the grace of God Queene of England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c. To the most noble and invincible Emperour of Persia, King of Shirvan, Gilan, Grosin, Corassan and great governor even unto the Indies, sendeth greeting (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 418).

The representation of Queen Elizabeth in the second letter has become more elaborate when compared with the first letter quoted above. Apart from being the “Queene of England,” France and Ireland are also appended to her dominion. Moreover, the title of the “defender of faith” which is absent in the first letter is added here presenting the Queen as a religious figure. Another difference between the two letters is the enumeration of more contemporary geographical locations ruled by the Persian King. The Medes, Parthians and Hircans of the earlier letter were easily recognizable in early modern Europe while Shirvan, Gilan and Corassan are not comparable with the former regions. This change in perception was precipitated by the reports pouring into England from Persia in the intervening decades and the English had modified their earlier views in accordance with the new information and knowledge they gained over these years. Anthony Jenkinson’s description of Persia is informative in this regard. According to him, “This land of Persia is great and ample, devided into many kingdomes and provinces, as Gillan, Corasan, Shirvan and many others...” (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 351). The beginning of the second letter seems to be influenced by Jenkinson’s description of Persia and he does not mention any geographical location associated with ancient Persia. The slashing of references to the Tigris, Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf is an indication that the Persians were losing territories to the neighbouring powers, as happened with Shirvan, conquered by the Ottomans in late 1570s, and which eventually led to the English abandonment of the Persian trade.

Jenkinson left England in May 1561 for Persia via Moscow. He spent the winter of 1561 in Moscow where he met the Persian ambassador to the Russian Emperor. Jenkinson left Russia for Persia on 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1562 in the company of the Persian ambassador and while crossing the Caspian Sea, they parted ways. Stormy weather endangered the lives of Jenkinson and his company but because of the “power and mercy of God” they were saved and reached a city called Derbent. He was entertained by Abdullah Khan, the ruler of Hircan based in the city of Shimaky. Abdullah Khan treated the Englishmen very well and showed keen interest in them. Jenkinson was invited to a sumptuous dinner in which he managed to count 290 dishes. After the dinner, the King welcomed him using the Persian



expression “Quoshe quelde” which is probably a transliteration of “*Khush Amded*” the most commonly used expression in Persian to welcome guests and then asked him some questions which reveal Abdullah Khan’s interest in world affairs. Jenkinson says,

...then he proponed [sic] unto me sundry questions, both touching religion, and also the state of our countreys, and further questioned whether the Emperor of Almaine, the Emperor of Russia, or the Great Turke, were of most power, with many other things too long here to rehearse, to whom I answered as I thought most meet (Hakluyt, 1589, 367).

Had Jenkinson reproduced the whole discussion in some detail, it would have shed some light on how a sixteenth century Muslim ruler visualized the contemporary world. Nevertheless, it shows that Abdullah Khan had some awareness of contemporary Europe and was curious to know more from those who had better knowledge of such affairs. Jenkinson does not mention how he tackled the question of the comparative power of the Emperor of Almaine, the Emperor of Russia and the Great Turk. But when he appeared before Shah Tahmasp, the Persian king also posed the same question to him regarding “...the power of Emperor of Almaine, king Philip, and the Great Turke, and which of them was of most power...” (Hakluyt, 1589, 370). The repetition of the same question in different places shows that both Abdullah Khan and Shah Tahmasp had the same concerns. Jenkinson’s reply to the question asked by the Persian Shah endorses the point of view put forward by Nabil Matar and other scholars on early modern Anglo-Islamic relations who believe that Saidian Orientalist and postcolonial models of East-West relations do not apply to the early modern period (Matar, 1998, 11-12). Jenkinson says that he answered the Shah’s question to his “...contentation, not dispraying the great Turke, their late concluded friendship considered” (Hakluyt, 1589, 370). This shows that Jenkinson’s answer was not honest as he was trying to appease the Persian King and did not want to offend him by telling him the ‘truth’. This is clear evidence how early modern Englishmen perceived themselves as weaker and sometimes lost the high moral ground that they proudly possessed in later colonial periods. From another angle, it demonstrates that Jenkinson was well-versed in diplomatic arts and he knew the price of annoying the Persian Shah.

The knowledge of the “late concluded friendship” between the Persians and the Ottomans is one of the most important developments that Jenkinson had come across in Persia. The

whole enterprise of English trade in Persia through Russia hinged upon the idea of Ottoman-Safavid enmity. The English traders had come up with the idea that since the Persians hated the Ottomans, they would be excited to know that the English traders wanted to divert commercial traffic away from Ottoman territories and through Russia, thereby depriving them of the toll they earned from this trade. But it was Jenkinson's bad luck that the Ottoman ambassador reached the Persian court a couple of days before him. There is another element that enhances the significance of this development. Most of the reports reaching England in the form of diplomatic correspondences regarding the rise of a new dynasty in Persia exclusively highlighted the anti-Ottomanism of the new rulers in Persia. Some of the reports went so far as to declare the Persian Sophy a Christian or proto-Christian King in the East who was there to rescue the European Christians from the onslaught of the Ottoman Turks. Jenkinson's narrative, for the first time, warns the English traders and strategists that they could not have great expectations of Persia in this regard.

During the time Jenkinson was in Persia, one of the major points of contention between the Safavid and Ottoman courts was resolving the issue of the Ottoman Sultan's rebel son who had taken refuge with the Safavid Shah. This rebel son was named Beyazid and Shah Tahmasp used him as a bargaining chip with his father. European courts kept a close eye on developments relating to the issue as it was hoped that it would keep the Ottoman Turks away from the Western frontier. Jenkinson and his patrons planned this expedition with the idea that the tension would continue between Safavids and Ottomans and it would facilitate their cause. Jenkinson himself comments on his strategy in his report: "The Turks Ambassadour was not then come into the land, neither any peace hoped to be concluded, but great preparation was made for warre, which was like much to have furthered my purpose, but it chanced otherwise" (Hakluyt, 1589, 370).

The preparations for war between the Ottomans and the Persians did not only further Jenkinson's purpose, it furthered the purpose of whole of Christian Europe. This is the reason that we find a strong European interest in the Ottoman-Safavid wars and this interest is best represented in the publication of pamphlets and treatises on such topics, culminating in Minadoi's *Historie of Warres between the Turkes and the Persians*. Interestingly enough, at the same time Jenkinson was in Persia as a representative of English trade, the

Ottoman Court hosted an Imperial French Ambassador, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbeque, who has left an account of his experiences there. Just as Jenkinson seems to be unhappy with the outbreak of peace, the French ambassador was similarly of the view that the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry served his purpose. After calling the issue of Bayazid's refuge with the Persian court and Ottoman attempts to seek his surrender an "awkward business," Busbecq expresses his feelings in these words: "I wish it may be so; for the fortunes of Bajazet and our interests are closely connected. The Turks will not readily turn their arms against us until they have settled his business" (Busbecq, 1968, 165-66). It is possible to render the same statement in a broader perspective. In fact, the nature of Ottoman-Safavid relations was closely connected with the interests of Christendom.

Jenkinson also comments on the Persian version of Islam. For the first time he makes it clear that Persians are "Mahometans" like "Turkes and Tartars." The idea that the Sophy wanted to destroy "Mahometanism" or he wished to become Christian (or he was a Christian already) gradually gave way to a new understanding of Islam in Persia and the difference of their Islam from the Islam of the Ottoman Turks. About Shah Tahmasp, he says:

...he professeth a kinde of holynesse and saith that he is descended of the blood of Mahomet and Murtezalli: and although these Persians be Mahometans, as the Turkes and Tartars be, yet honour they this false fained Murtezalli...(Hakluyt, 1589, 373).

Another agent of the Muscovy Company, Geoffrey Ducket, later explained Persian religion in some detail. His account was written in 1569 and one of the sections is titled "Of the religion of the Persians." The starting sentence of the section further reinforces the perception earlier made by Jenkinson: "Their religion is all one with the Turkes, saving that they differ who was the right successor of Mahumet" (Hakluyt, 1589, 422). Both Jenkinson and Ducket don't leave any doubt that Persians and 'Turks' are both Muslims and their differences are, in fact, rather insubstantial.

Another aspect of Jenkinson's narrative that needs to be discussed here is the Persian Sophy's attitude towards Christianity. This undermined another myth that persisted in Western expectations of the impending Christianity of the Persian Sophy. On 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1562, Jenkinson got the opportunity to see the Persian King. The story of his

arrival at the Court's gate and his treatment there is worth mentioning. Before he alighted from his horse and his feet could touch the ground, he was asked to put off his shoes and was given another pair of shoes to wear. He explains the reason for the change of shoes:

...without the same shoes I might not be suffered to tread upon his holy ground, being a Christian, and called amongst them Gower, that is unbeleeve, and unclean: esteeming all to be infidels and Pagans which do not beleeve as they do in their false filthie prophets, Mahomet and Murtezalli (Hakluyt, 1589, 370).

Christians were treated as unclean by the Persians and Jenkinson's feelings seem to be hurt by the Persian practice as is evident from his use of "filthie" for "Mahomet and Murtezalli." This practice of alienating Jenkinson continued when he was asked to leave the court of the Persian Sophy at the end of their meeting. When he was moving out, he says, "...after me followed a man with a Basanet of sand, sifting all the way that I had gone within the said palace, even from the said Sophies sight unto the court gate" (Hakluyt, 1589, 370). The sifting of the sand on Jenkinson's footsteps was to symbolically hint at the impurity of a non-believer.

Both the entry and exit had elements of insult for Jenkinson. What happened in the presence of Shah Tahmasp was even worse. Tahmasp's first question to Jenkinson concerned his nationality and the purpose of his visit. He answered him thus:

...I was of the famous city of London within the noble Realm of England, and that I was sent thither from the most excellent and gracious soveraigne Lady Elizabeth Queene of the saide Realme for to treat of friendship, and free passage of our Merchants and people... (Hakluyt, 1589, 370).

Jenkinson does not mention Shah Tahmasp's reaction over this and it seems as if the Shah had some knowledge of European geography and knew of London and England. Or perhaps he was indifferent to the exact location of this region which seems more plausible, as later evidence shows. An English merchant, Arthur Edwards, who was one of the members of the fourth voyage to Persia (1565), had a chance to see Shah Tahmasp. He stood far off from the Persian King who bade him to come near thrice and he was so near that he could touch the King with his hand. The King's first question concerned his origins. He answered that he came from England. On hearing this, the King asked his noble men,

...who knew any such country? But when Edwards saw that none of them had any intelligence of that name, he named it Inghilterra, as the Italians called England. Then one of the noble men said Londra, meaning thereby London, which name is better known in far countries out of Christendom, then is the name of England (Hakluyt, 1589, 416).

The King was unable to recall England, though he had heard it from Anthony Jenkinson a few years previously and might have heard it from other sources as well. It also shows that the Persian courtiers had a little knowledge of England and London in the 1560s and this must have been the result of earlier English voyages to Persia.

Coming back to Jenkinson's reception at the Persian court, the Persian Sophy is said to have reasoned with him in matters of religion. After this reasoning, the King asked Jenkinson whether he was a "Gower, that is to say, an unbeliever, or a Muselman, that is of Mahometes lawe." Jenkinson's answer to this question was that he "was neither unbeleever nor Mahometan but a Christian" (Hakluyt, 1589, 370). Shah Tahmasp's response to this is even more puzzling and it seems that he had a great sense of humour and irony and was enjoying his powerful position by putting Jenkinson in an awkward position. He had a Christian prince in his court who was the son of Georgian King. To that prince, Shah Tahmasp posed the question—what was a Christian? It is almost impossible to believe that Tahmasp did not know what a Christian was. The Georgian prince defined a Christian as a person who "beleeveeth in Jesus Christus, affirming him to be the Sonne of God, and the greatest Prophet." When Jenkinson was asked to confirm whether or not he was a Christian and confirmed it positively, Shah Tahmasp burst with anger and shouted at him: "O thou unbeleever...we have no need to have friendship with the unbeleever..." (Hakluyt, 1589, 371). Jenkinson was asked to leave the court and writes, "I being glad thereof did reverence and went my way being accompanied with many of his gentlemen and others..." (Hakluyt, 1589, 371). Jenkinson is very diplomatic in being glad at what the Sophy did with him and this must have raised his stature in the eyes of his employers. At first sight, it seems that it was a religiously motivated reaction but later on it emerges that it was more politically motivated with a view to consolidate the recently agreed pact of friendship with the Ottoman Turks.

Jenkinson was later met by many of the courtiers of the Persian King in order to probe further the cause of his coming to Persia. One of the suspicions harboured by the Persians was that he was on a spying mission from the Portuguese, “thinking them and us to be all one people, and calling all by the name of Franks” as Jenkinson explains, but he succeeded in persuading them that he had nothing to do with the Portuguese. The major concern of the Persians was how the Ottoman Turks would react to their trade relations with the English. The Ottoman ambassador and his companions who were in Persia at that point were acutely aware of the dangers to Ottoman commercial interests if Jenkinson was offered trade privileges. The Ottoman merchants in Persia, according to Jenkinson, informed their ambassador that Jenkinson’s

...coming thither (naming me by the name of Franke) would in great part destroy their trade, and that it should be great for him to perswade the Sophy not to favour me, as his Highness meant to observe the league and friendship with the Great Turke his master...(Hakluyt, 1589, 370).

The Ottoman wish was fulfilled and Jenkinson’s mistreatment was to show off to the Ottoman Turks the seriousness of the Persian court in pursuing good relations with them. This is further confirmed by Jenkinson when he narrates how the Persians treated him after his meeting with the Shah. The advisors of the Shah opined that he should not entertain the English trader well, nor should he give him any letters of privilege. Their logic was that as Jenkinson,

...was a Franke, and of that nation that was enemie to the great Turke his brother, perswading that if he did otherwise, and that the newes thereof should come to the knowledge of the Turke, it should be a meane to breake their new league and friendship lately concluded...(Hakluyt, 1589, 371).

The brotherhood of the Persian Sophy and the “great Turke” creates a new image of Persia that was contrary to the earlier images of Persia as anti-Ottoman and pro-Christian. The new image had dissolved all boundaries between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians, transforming Persia into a junior partner of the Ottomans. The Persian Sophy was advised by his advisor to send Anthony Jenkinson to the Ottoman Sultan as a gift in order to consolidate their friendship. Abdullah Khan once again came to his rescue, and asked Shah Tahmasp not to proceed with his plans to send Jenkinson to Turkey. As Abdullah Khan was “one of the

valientest princes” under the Persian King and his “nigh kinsman” the Shah changed his mind, sent a gift for him and let him go without any harm.

What is significant is the Persian perception of England as enemy of the Ottoman Turks. Jenkinson’s reply to Shah Tahmasp concerning who was the most powerful ruler among the Emperor of Germany, King Philip of Spain and the Ottoman Sultan was careful and he declared the Ottoman Sultan as the most powerful. The Ottoman envoy in the Persian court was sharp enough to understand the impact of Jenkinson’s plan on Ottoman trade and must have been instrumental in influencing Persian perceptions. When Jenkinson reached the court of Abdullah Khan, one of the questions asked by the King of Hircan of Jenkinson was whether the English traders “had friendship with the Turks or not,” his reply was “...we never had friendship with them...”(Hakluyt, 1589, 370). The enmity of the Turks which could have been regarded a credit in Persia turned out to be a discredit for Jenkinson and his dilemma is evident from his answers to those questions dealing with the might of the Ottomans in comparison with the other Christian rulers. There was a very clear message in the Shah’s treatment of Jenkinson that the Ottomans and the Persians were ‘brothers’ and once they had eliminated their differences, the common enemy of both of them were Christians, both Eastern and Western.

The unity of Ottomans and Persians against the Christians is well illustrated in one of the narrations of the plight of Armenian and Georgian Christians. On his way back, when Jenkinson was staying in Shamakhi, an Armenian came to see him who was sent by the King of Georgia. The Armenian briefed Jenkinson about the,

...lamentable estate of the same king, that being enclosed betwixt those two cruell tyrants and mightie princes, the said great Turke and the Sophie, hee had continuall warres with them, requiring for the love of Christ and as I was a Christian, that I would send him comfort by the said Armenian, and advise how he might send his Ambassadour to the sayd Emperour of Russia...(Hakluyt, 1589, 372).

The new perception of Persia as anti-Christian like the Ottomans contradicts earlier perceptions of Persia. There might be some truth in reports of Persian leniency towards the Christians at times when they were pressed to seek military assistance from them to fight against the Ottoman Turks. Moreover, Shah Ismail’s pedigree might have facilitated such speculations. But Jenkinson’s account made it very clear to Elizabethan observers of

Persian affairs that the Persians and Ottomans were capable of bridging their differences and focusing their attention on a common enemy. An example of such anti-Christian alliance was the mistreatment of Christians in Armenia and Georgia. As many European accounts before and after Jenkinson talk of the “continuall warres” between the Ottomans and the Persians, this report, on the contrary, tells the readers about the “continuall warres” of the “two cruell tyrants” against the Georgian Christians.

As long as the Persian Shahs were challenging Ottoman authority and trying to conquer their lands, they were characterized with positive traits. What Jenkinson and successive travellers from England saw was quite different from what they were expecting. As a result, their evaluation and rating of Shah Tahmasp is very poor when compared with the Ottoman Sultan. “This Sophie that now raigneth,” says Jenkinson. “is nothing valiant, although his power be great, and his people martiall...” (Hakluyt, 1589, 372). Then he goes on to narrate how the Persian Sophy had been forced to change his capital from Tauris to Kazvin under Ottoman pressure, how he was unable to withstand Ottoman military might and how he had to hide himself in the mountains to save his life. Similarly, Geffery Ducket expresses the identical view a few years later. According to Ducket,

The Shaugh or king of Persia is nothing in strength & power comparable unto the Turke: for although he hath a great Dominion, yet is it nothing compared with the Turks: neither hath he any great Ordinance, or gunnes or harquebusses (Hakluyt, 1589, 423).

Ducket does not blame the person of the Sophy (whom he calls “Shaugh”) as the major cause of the weakness of Persia. The feeling that the Persians were weak militarily on account of not having “modern” weaponry runs through almost all early modern Christian works dealing with Ottoman-Persian battles and especially those that deal with the defeats of the Persians.

Jenkinson and Ducket contributed towards early English knowledge of sectarian division in Islam. They bring “Murtezalli,” or “Mortus Ali” (as Ducket prefers to call him) to prominence, as one of the important figures in the history of Islam. It is not unique: Dante had already displayed his knowledge of the significance of Ali by depicting him as the companion of Prophet Muhammad in his “Inferno;” nevertheless; it must have been a new idea for those Englishmen who were devouring the travel narratives included in Hakluyt’s



*Principall Navigations*. Prior to these accounts, the only figurehead attached to Islam was “Mahomet.” But with such accounts, the knowledge base of English readers was slowly and gradually expanding, they were not only instructed about Ali, but also about the first three successors of Prophet Muhammad. These accounts also signify the rising power of the Ottoman Turks, which the Persian King and his court also acknowledged. The status of Persia in comparison with the Ottomans seems to be that of a vassal state in Jenkinson’s account. The Persian noblemen were so terrified by the power of the Ottoman Sultan that they persuaded the Shah not to entertain Jenkinson and even to send him to Turkey as a gift to appease the Ottoman Sultan. Jenkinson’s mission would have been a total failure had he not been able to get a letter of privileges from Abdullah Khan for English traders to operate in the area under his control. The English continued trading there for almost two decades before they abandoned the enterprise when the Ottomans conquered these lands, “...effectively obstructing the English route to Persia...” (Andrews, 1984, 84). One of the main reasons for the cessation of English trade with Persia was an Ottoman victory over the Persians. Now the English had no other choice but to resort to the Ottoman if they wanted a share in the eastern trade and they made a pragmatic decision which was also necessary in view of the rising threat from Catholic Spain.

Anglo-Ottoman relations officially started in 1581 when William Harborne was appointed as an ambassador to the Ottoman court. For the next two decades, England had active commercial links with the Ottomans. Apart from trade, the two sides negotiated military cooperation as well. The English were desperate to solicit Ottoman aid before and after the Spanish Armada of 1588. In her attempt to lure the Ottomans to accept such a proposal, the letters written by Queen Elizabeth to the Ottoman Sultan tried to suggest that the Ottomans and the Protestants both hated idolatry and opposed the Catholics of Spain. This new identification between Protestant Christianity and Sunni Islam rendered Shi’a Persia irrelevant and peripheral for Elizabethan policy makers. The English who were eager to seek Ottoman assistance against Catholic Spain realized that Ottoman-Persian conflict could distract the Ottomans from concentrating on Spain, endangering English security. Hence, the fortunes of Protestants, Sunnis, Catholics and Shias become interconnected in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The English Protestants were now desirous of peace between Sunnis and the Shi’as so that the Sunnis could attack the Catholics and save the Protestants.

Catholic Spain was bribing one of the commanders of Ottoman navy to work in their favour by encouraging the Ottoman Sultan to keep fighting with Persia so that the Sunni-Protestant alliance would not materialize (Pears, 1893). The English realized the disadvantage of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict for them by the beginning of the 1580s as is evident from a despatch quoted by Dimmock in his *New Turkes* from the Calendar of State Papers, where it is reported that Queen Elizabeth wrote to the Ottoman Sultan that “she and her brother, the King of France, will endeavour to stand between him and the Persian, in order that he [the Ottoman Sultan] may be free to do this [attack Spain]”(Dimmock, 2005, 89). What is significant is the confidence of Queen Elizabeth that she could influence the Persians not to attack the Ottomans.

The representation of Persia that emerges from the above details is once again of a state that was anti-Ottoman and by analogy pro-Christian. Assisting Persia militarily against the Ottomans was, earlier in the century, a great service for Christendom. Robert Brancetour, an English merchant from London had apparently personally visited Shah Tahmasp and persuaded him to fight against the Ottomans. Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor was fully convinced that it was because of Brancetour’s advocacy that the Persian Shah attacked the Ottomans in 1530s. Jenkinson, who went to Persia to seek trade privileges from the Persian Shah with the perception that the Ottoman and the Persian were mortal enemies and he would be able to exploit this situation, had met with failure. A new representation of pro-Ottoman and by the same analogy anti-Christian Persia emerges from his reports which also represent the Persian Shah as a weakling in comparison with the Ottoman Sultan. One added dimension of Jenkinson’s, as well as his successor Duckett’s, reports is the explication of the religious differences between the Ottomans and the Persians giving prominence to the figure of Ali Ibn Abu Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by Day, Wilkins and Rowley, a play based on the adventures of three Sherley Brothers in Persia and Turkey combines all the above images of Persia in the same text.

With the accession of Shah Abbas in 1587, Persia became an even more important player in international politics. The perception of the weakness of the Persian state when compared to the Ottomans diminished and a new powerful image of Persia started taking shape. One

of the most significant characteristics of Abbas's personality was his tolerance of Christians. By the time he ascended to the Persian throne, a long history of encounters between Persia and Christian Europe already existed. As a result, his fame as a tolerant ruler reached Christian Europe and a number of European Christians travelled to Persia and stayed there for prolonged periods. He also wrote letters to Christian Kings and invited them to join with him against the Ottoman Turks (Abbas, 1588). Two of the most well-known visitors to Persia with the idea of developing contacts between Persia and Europe were the English brothers Anthony and Robert Sherley. Anthony and Robert were the sons of Sir Thomas Sherley (c.1542-1612) of Wiston, West Sussex. Out of the nine children that Sir Thomas had, three became famous, especially as the subjects of the play *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* first performed in London in 1607. The eldest of the three was also called Thomas Sherley (1564-1633/34) and he was a privateer. On one of his privateering campaigns in February 1603, he was captured by the Turks and was released from his captivity in December 1605 on James I's direct intervention (Raiswell, 2004; Ross, 1934). The claim to fame of the other two brothers, Sir Anthony Sherley (1565-1636?) and Sir Robert Sherley (1581-1628) is the role they played as Persian envoys to European courts in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and their efforts to bind Persians and Christians in a military and commercial alliance (Davies, 1967; Ross, 1933). They reached Persia after passing through difficult and dangerous terrain under Ottoman control towards the end of 1598. The Earl of Essex was instrumental in their going to Persia (Bowe, 1977, 38), intending that they exhort the Persian King (who is called the Persian Sophy, both in the play and other associated travel narratives) to join hands with the Christian princes to attack the Ottomans from east and west simultaneously. Shah Abbas appointed Anthony as his envoy to the European courts along with a Persian, Husain Ali Beg, to finalize the plan. Robert Sherley stayed back in Persia as a guarantee and worked for the Persian military, organizing it on modern lines.

The Sherley Brothers became the subject of much speculation in official as well as public circles. One of the early accounts of Anthony Sherley that appeared in England in the form of an anonymous pamphlet was suppressed which shows the nuisance value of the adventures of Anthony and Robert (Sherley, 1600). One cause of concern in England might have been the implications of Sherley's project for Anglo-Ottoman relations. The second

cause of concern might have been Anthony's association with the Earl of Essex, who had rebelled against the Queen by the time Anthony was on his way to various Christian courts as an Ambassador of Shah Abbas. Finally, and more importantly, the two brothers were operating without the consent of the English monarch and their purpose was not to serve the English traders' cause in a highly competitive and divided world. This is evident from the first pamphlet published in England in 1600 regarding Anthony's sojourn to Persia. The pamphlet's title mentions the "priuiledg obtained of the great Sophie, for the quiet passage and trafique of all Christian marchants, throughout his whole dominions." The "Christian marchants" seems to allude to a pre-Reformation European world but in 1600 the divisions of the Reformation were still stark. There were either Catholic or Protestant merchants. That Anthony's project lacked any official patronage led to anxiety in the English court over the ulterior motives of the brothers. Whatever the reasons, the Sherley brothers remained in the lime-light for the first quarter of seventeenth century on account of their role in international politics.

The dramatization of these adventures is an important milestone in the history of early modern Anglo-Persian encounters. The allusions to contemporary Persia in early modern texts are steady throughout the sixteenth century. But these allusions were sometimes in diplomatic correspondence whose readership was extremely limited and could only influence the perceptions of very few individuals. At other times, references to Persia are found in historical texts that would have been accessible only to those capable of affording and reading them. The reports of the agents of the trading companies, such as Jenkinson and his successors, were not easily available before 1577 when some of these reports were published in Richard Eden and Richard Willes and later in the first edition of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589). However, drama was a popular forum in Elizabethan England that had the potential to introduce new ideas to a more general public that were earlier known only to a selected few. It was Day, Rowley and Wilkins' *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* that introduced the nature of Anglo-Persian relations in the early seventeenth century into the public sphere, casting Shah Abbas as the hero of the play. This was Shah Abbas's first visit to England.

The first reference to the Persian Sophy in an extant play is found in Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1592). Bruser, one of the characters in the play is welcomed by another character, Cipris, who praises his worth as a military commander. On his turn to speak, he introduces himself in the following words:

Against the Sophy in three pitched fields,  
Vnder the conduct of great *Soliman* ,  
Haue I bene chiefe commaunder of an hoast,  
And put the flint heart Perseans to the sword.

(Kyd, 1592, B1v-r)

The wars between the 'Turks' and the Persians which had been a favourite topic of a large number of European chroniclers and historians had now entered the dramatic text. Though Bruser mentions a number of fronts where he had fought against the enemies of the Ottoman Turks, he gives the first preference to his role against the Persian Sophy which shows that Kyd believed that the Persians were the primary enemy of the Ottomans.

There is a very close resemblance between the speech quoted above and Prince Morocco's speech in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-7). Morocco is in conversation with Portia and is trying to impress her by his brave deeds. He swears by his "scimitar": "That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince/That won three fields for Sultan Solyman" (II.i. 25-26). Shakespeare pits the Sophy against the Sultan which reiterates the view that the early modern Englishmen differentiated the Persian monarchy from the Ottoman by using different titles for them. The title of Sultan for the Persian ruler was used when writers intended to conflate the Ottomans and the Persians.

Shakespeare refers to the Sophy twice in *Twelfth Night* and the references are a testimony to Shakespeare's awareness of the Sherley Brothers. One is in Fabian's speech who mentions "a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy" while the other is when Sir Toby says of Fabian that "he has been fencer to the Sophy" (II.v.181 and III.iv.277-78). The second of the references seems to allude to Sir Robert Sherley's role in the reorganization of Persian military (Ward, 2009, 47). As it is believed that the play was first performed in 1601, the mention of a pension of thousands might be a bit too early for the brothers as both were still in the service of the Sophy. But this reveals an image of the Persian king who was perceived to be rich and could bestow lavish pensions. These

references to Persia in Shakespeare's plays show that English interest in Persia had started influencing the popular dramatists of the time and it is demonstrated in the studies by Draper and Niayesh (Draper, 1951; Niayesh, 2008). *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* is the most significant of the plays concerning Persia in early modern England. The genre of the play has been described in a variety of ways by scholars who have shown interest in plays dealing with the representation of Islam in early modern drama. Anthony Parr has included it in his anthology of 'Travel Plays' and has made it available to a wider readership and in modern spelling (Parr, 1999). One early twentieth century scholar calls it an "historical play" (Scott, 1916, 408) while one nineteenth century editor of Shakespeare considered it a comedy (Joseph Dennie, 1805, 60). It has also been described as a "rambling romance" (Sarah Stanton, 1996, 92) and as an "exotic citizen romance" (Courtland, 2001, 124). Jonathan Burton has given a list of "Dramatic Works with Islamic Characters, Themes, or Settings" between 1579 and 1624 (Burton, 2005, 257-258). He includes *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* in the category of plays that he calls "Topical plays" but interestingly, it is the only topical play in the whole list, testimony to the fact that *The Travailes* was a unique play, and is perhaps still considered so. Linda McJannet, in a paper on plays dealing with Persia, has shown that their number is far greater than earlier assessments. She has produced a list of 31 plays dealing with Persia between 1527 and 1660, enough to show that there was a fashion for Persian themes and characters in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (McJanet, 1999, 241). While all such characterizations of the play are partially true, it is possible to suggest that *The Travailes* is most helpfully characterized as another "Persian Play," devoted to Persian issues and characters.

There is a general consensus amongst scholars that *The Travailes* is based on Anthony Nixon's pamphlet *The Three English Brothers* that was published in London in 1607, the same year that the play was performed and printed. Both the texts were entered in the Stationer's Register within three weeks of each other which may show that Nixon's treatise and the play were being written at the same time and Anthony Nixon had some coordination with Day, Rowley and Wilkins. It also opens up the possibility of another source that was feeding both Nixon and the playwrights and the source might have been the elder of the three brothers, Sir Thomas Sherley who had recently returned from Turkey

after his imprisonment. Bernadette Andrea is of the view that the playwrights might have learnt about the activities of Anthony and Robert from their brother Sir Thomas who was spearheading the campaign to improve their image in London (Andrea, 2008, 45). Moreover, there is some evidence in the play that the dramatists might have drawn their knowledge of the sectarian differences of Persians and ‘Turks’ from Geoffry Ducket’s account of the Persian religion in Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations*.

During the sixteenth century, the Ottomans were the greatest threat to Christian Europe and anti-Ottomanism was dominant across early modern Europe. In England, theatre was at the fore front of this campaign to present the Ottoman Turks as the primary enemy of Christian religion and way of life. English plays dealing with the Ottoman Turks became extremely popular from the last quarter of the sixteenth century till the first half of the seventeenth. One of the recurring themes of the plays featuring ‘Turks’ or generally dealing with the ‘Turks’ is the danger of conversion to Islam, which had come to be known in early modern England as ‘Turning Turk,’ as scholars such as Nabil Matar, Daniel Vitkus, Jonathan Burton and others have shown in their works (Matar, 1994; Matar, 1998, Vitkus, 1997; Potter 1996; Burton, 2005; Degenhardt, 2006). The coincidence of the Reformation with the rising tide of the Ottoman threat further complicated the situation as both Catholics and Protestants started characterising each other as the accomplices of the ‘Turks’. Internal divisions in Christianity could have proved fatal had it not been for the Persians engaging the Ottomans from the east. The discovery of Persian anti-Ottomanism was happy news for internally divided Christianity as the house of Islam was also divided.

When Anthony and Robert reached Persia in late 1598, Abbas had kept peace with the Ottomans since 1590. He was a pragmatic ruler who knew that he could not possibly open all fronts at the same time. He took this time strengthening his position, improving relations with the Christian princes and dealing with less powerful neighbours such as the Uzbek Tartars, Armenians and Georgians. He encouraged Christian merchants to engage in trade in Persian goods which resulted in the sound financial position of Safavid Persia. Despite the fact that the Ottomans and the Safavids were not fighting in the 1590s or perhaps because of it, the Sherley brothers decided to go to Persia with the proposal of an anti-Ottoman alliance. The image of Safavid-Ottoman enmity had taken deep roots in the

European imagination and the peace agreements between the two were considered to be time buying tactics by outside observers.

The play opens with an exhibition of Persian anti-Ottomanism. The first scene reveals that the day Anthony, Robert and their companions reached the Persian capital Qasvin, the Persian Sophy was returning victorious from a battle ground: 'Accompanied with a glorious tribute/Which forty thousand Turkish lives have paid' (I.7-8). As Anthony Parr notes regarding these lines, historically, Abbas was returning from his campaign against the Uzbek but the playwrights's purpose could only be served by replacing the Uzbeks with the 'Turks'. The mention of Perso-Ottoman war right at the beginning of the play also shows the long held interest in these wars by European Christians. One of the first entertainments arranged for the English visitors was a mock-battle through which the Sophy wanted to acquaint Anthony and others with Persian military skills. Half of the soldiers who took part in the mock battle pretended to be 'Turks', while the rest were Persians. The Persians drove out the 'Turks' and the former entered the stage with "heads on their swords." There could have been no better way of presenting the difference between the 'Turks' and the Persians than the hoisting of 'Turkish' heads on Persian swords.

The Englishmen in Anthony's company also exhibit their military skills and Anthony eventually presents himself to the Persian ruler as a mercenary on the condition that he would be unable to fight against Christians. He tells the Sophy: 'My force and power is yours, say but the word,/So against Christians I may draw no sword' (I.146-47). This condition shows that there was a perception that the Sophy could fight against Christians as well if circumstances required. The Sophy was a potential enemy of Christianity but he informs the "worthy Christian" that he "shalt be general against the Turks" and informs him of his value in his eyes: 'A camp of equal spirits to thyself/Would turn all Turkey into Persia' (I.155). The Persian desire of turning "all Turkey into Persia" finds a parallel in a line uttered by the Pope where he asks Anthony to accompany him to Saint Angelo: '...thus hand in hand,/Then counsel, to make Christian Turkish land' (V.88). This powerful vision of either converting Turkey into Persia or a Christian country reinforces the similarities in the Perso-Christian agenda against the Turks. The Sophy and the Pope have a common anti-Ottoman ground.



The idea of a league between Persia and Christendom is the most prominent anti-Ottoman project of the play. The image of Persian military might in the play is of a great and equal power to the Ottomans. Scene two of the play depicts the Great Turk who rebukes his followers for their poor performance against the Persians and he orders them to re-launch their attack. Then the Great Turk himself commands his soldiers in an encounter between with the Sophy. While they exchange hot words and threaten each other, Anthony Sherley advises the Persian Sophy: 'Endure him not, great emperor' (II.35).

The Sophy is presented as a person who has control of his nerves and after suggesting Anthony be patient, addresses the Great Turk thus:

Know thou again in this just war I'm knit  
With Christians and with subjects whose warlike arms  
Like steel rebate not, but like fire shall fly  
To burn thee down whose pride's above the sky.  
(II.37-40)

It is evident here that the Sophy takes pride in the Sherley brothers as they become part of his military. The image of being knit with Christians conveys the sense of close relationship between the Persians and the Sherley brothers. This is the first sign of an anti-Ottoman alliance between the Christians and Persians. Once this military clash is over, whose result has not been good for the Persians (as appears from the words of Anthony who says "Our patron the great Sophy hath the worst!" (II.58)), we find the Persian Sophy inviting his advisors to discuss the possibility of a league between Persia and Christendom. The Sophy makes it clear that the idea of league was proposed by Anthony and he asks Anthony to explain the benefits of such league. Anthony's answer is imbued with strong religious language which creates the impression that the Sophy had deep sympathy for Christianity. The benefit of the league Anthony wants to highlight is spiritual rather than material. Anthony tells the Sophy that if he makes peace with the Christian princes, "angel's hands" will guard him and will fight for him. Moreover, he assures him that

Religious men shall wear their bended knees  
Even to the bone, in ceaseless prayers for you;  
To whose continual kneeling, tears and sighs  
Heaven's ears be never shut but do receive  
Their souls' devotion...  
(II.171-75)

The idea that Christian religious men will pray for the Persians' victory is surprising and reveals how Anthony understood the value of Ottoman-Safavid war. Though there is a persistent tradition of seeing both the Persians and 'Turks' as "infidels," "Barbarians" and "Mahometans" in English writings, this part of the play represents another tradition, equally strong, of considering Persians better than 'Turks' and favouring them in every sense in their fight against the Ottomans. The Persian Sophy is portrayed as a tolerant and liberal ruler who tries to accommodate the two English brothers. He employs Anthony as his envoy to Christian princes and his brother Robert as commander of his army. But there are limitations to this positive representation of Persia. Despite the fact that the Sophy has been very kind to the Englishmen, at one occasion in the play he turns against both the brothers as a result of conspiracies against them by the two Persian detractors. Calimath and Halibeck do not accept the Sherley brothers right from the beginning of the play and express their dislike of them in ironical asides and at some points oppose their proposals to the Persian Sophy. Thus, Persia in the play is perpetually double-faced—anti-Ottoman and anti-Christian. The anti-Christian aspect of Persia collapses the difference between them and the Ottomans, who are also anti-Christian, and this representation turns the Persians into "Mahometans" like Ottomans. The whole project of alliance between the Persians and Christians fails because of the Persian counterpart of Anthony Sherley—Halibeck—who causes troubles for him when they are in Russia. Anthony's score settling with the Persian in the presence of the Pope sends wrong messages to those wishing to become part of the alliance.

The two Persian characters, Calimath and Halibeck, symmetrically parallel the two English brothers. Anthony and Robert Sherley, in pursuing the idea of alliance between Christian princes and Persia, violated the policy of Elizabeth I who was on good terms with the Ottoman Sultan. The two Persians in opposing the Sherley brothers' goal of alliance were violating the official policy of the Persian Sophy to have good relations with the Christian princes and consequently, their actions were beneficial for the Ottoman Turks. While Anthony and Halibeck are partners in the embassy, Robert and Calimath stay behind in Persia and work to achieve their respective objectives. The choice of the name Calimath for one of the Persian detractors of the Sherleys indicates the dramatists' desire to link him with the Ottoman. The only other character bearing the same name is an Ottoman Prince,

Selim-Calymath in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. There is another important link between *The Travailes* and *The Jew of Malta*. While in the latter play, the Jews and the Turks are accomplices in planning the destruction of Christians and Christianity, the same role is played by a Jew and a Persian in the former. The episode involving Zariph, the Jew, and Halibeck in their plan against Anthony, a Christian, immediately brings to mind memories of *The Jew of Malta* and once again clearly conflates the Persian and the 'Turk'. Calimath of *The Travailes* is turned into a 'Turk' of *The Jew of Malta* through his name while Halibeck becomes a 'Turk' through his anti-Christian acts. This shows that the representation of Persia and Persians in the play is far more sophisticated and complex than previously thought.

*The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* is unique in presenting the Prophet Muhammad and his cousin and son-in-law Ali as the two figures that define Ottoman and Persian identities on the early modern stage. The Ottoman characters never mention "Mortus Ali" in their speeches and only mention "Mahomet," while the Persians almost always mention his name and not that of 'Mahomet'. Interestingly, not only "Mortus Ali" is presented as a devotional figure. The Persians also keep mentioning other gods that they believe in. For example, when the Sophy has his first encounter with the Sherley brothers, he speaks thus: 'Next Mortus Ali, and those deities/To whom we Persians pay devotion,/We do adore thee...' (I.86-88).

Halibeck, who is unhappy at the reception of the Sherleys, expresses his anger in the following words: 'Ye Persian gods, look on:/The Sophy will profane your deities, And make an idol of a fugitive' (I.157-59). In the same manner, when the Persian Sophy's niece turns her attention away from Halibeck and falls in love with Robert Sherley, Calimath is highly disturbed by this development and upon failing to persuade her to be loyal to his brother, he decides to bring the issue to the Sophy's notice saying: 'By Mortus Ali and our Persian gods,/The Sophy shall have note on't' (III. 154-55). When the charge sheet against Robert is presented to the Sophy, he gets furious and swears by the name of "Mortus Ali" (XI.1). And upon knowing that Robert has not killed the captive Ottoman soldiers and has even been negotiating with the Ottoman Sultan for the release of his brother, Thomas Sherley, against the release of these captive Ottoman soldiers, the Sophy shows his

resentment saying: 'By Mortus Ali and our Persian gods,/For every man he saved I'll have a joint/And for conversing with the Turk, his head'(XI.17-19). These quotations add a classical and pagan touch to the image of Persia in the play and present Persian religion as a combination of Classical Persian beliefs and Shi'a Islam. Further evidence of this is found in speeches by Halibeck and Calimath in the presence of the Sophy. When the Sophy asks Anthony of the benefits of a joint Persian-Christian war against the Ottomans, he replies: 'Honour to your name, bliss to your soul' (II.188).

Halibeck loses his patience and openly confronts Anthony and tries to repudiate his ideas and there ensues a polemical discussion between them on the superiority of their respective deities. After telling the Sophy that an alliance between Persia and the Christians will be destructive for both parties, he asks the Sophy:

Shall you, whose empire for these thousand years  
Have given their adoration to the sun,  
That silver moon and those her countless eyes,  
That like so many servants wait on her  
Forsake those lights? (II.190-94)

Before the Sophy can say anything, Calimath reinforces his brother's position by asserting that it would not be wise for his "sacred sovereign" to forget that by showing allegiance to the sun, his ancestors had been successful in building a great empire. Then Halibeck challenges Anthony to prove that his God is better than theirs:

What can this English Christian say that they receive  
Of gift, of comfort, riches or of life  
Unto the deity that he adores,  
That we enjoy not from that glorious lamp? (II.199-202)

Halibeck further describes the superiority of sun over Christian deity: 'Our God gives us this light by which we see' (II.205). Anthony's reply is logical and befitting here:

And our God made that light by which you see.  
Then who can this deny, if not a Turk,  
That maker still is better than his work? (II.206-208)

By mentioning the 'Turk' here, Anthony equates the position of Halibeck with that of the 'Turks' and thus tries to suggest that Halibeck is more of a 'Turk' than a Persian. The opposition of Persian and Christian deities here stands in stark contrast to the earlier stance of Anthony Sherley in a highly stylized and philosophical speech in response to the Persian

Sophy's question on the difference "'twixt us and you." He makes a case for a humanistic understanding of the universe which dissolves all boundaries and difference among races, nations and tribes and ends his speech with the following line: 'Our sins are all alike; why not our God?' (I.180). Later on, however, Halibeck and Calimath put him in awkward position by comparing the sun with the Christian God and not much scope is left for Anthony but to state that the Christian God is superior to the Persian deity. The mention of the Persian gods or deities by the Sophy includes the mention of "Mortus Ali" which shows that his belief is a hybrid mix of classical and Islamic ideas. Halibeck and Calimath also share the same belief but at one point they turn into pure Zoroastrians and forget "Mortus Ali" indicating, perhaps, an early modern English perception that Zoroastrianism still existed in 16<sup>th</sup> century Persia.

"Mortus Ali" figures more prominently in one of the scenes in the play that depicts the story of a Persian victory over the Turks. We may call it a conversion scene and it has a parallel in another scene where Thomas Sherley is asked by the Ottoman Sultan to 'turn Turk' to be released from prison. The two scenes clearly set the 'Turks', Persians and Christians apart from each other: Persians as devotees of Ali, 'Turks' as devotees of Muhammad and Christians as enemies of Muhammad. By abstaining to comment negatively about Ali, the Christians clearly show a preference for the Shi'a version of Islam of Safavids over the Sunni version of the Ottoman Turks.

Robert Sherley and some other Persians are shown to have captured some 'Turks'. Robert Sherley's position is clearly subservient to the Persians when he says that he is unable to practice his "Christian clemency" since he is the "Persian substitute" there and orders all the captive soldiers to be beheaded. Before they are killed, Robert addresses them:

Speak, do you renounce your prophet Mahomet?  
Bow to the deity that we adore  
Or die in the refusal. (VII.17-19)

In demanding the renunciation of Mahomet, is Robert pursuing his Christian agenda? The next line, however, makes things more complex. When he asks the 'Turks' to "bow to the deity that *we* adore," what does he mean by the pronoun "we"? Does he mean we "Christians" or as he is unable to practice his Christian clemency being a Persian substitute, by "we" he means "we Persians"? The third and more plausible option might be that by

“we” he meant the newly established alliance of Christians and Persians and the first line above is the demand of the Christian ally while the second represents the demand of the classical Zoroastrian Persian. Robert Sherley emerges as a double character who is an English Christian and a Persian at the same time. This duality is evident throughout his career in Persia and especially in his diplomatic service for Shah Abbas where he tried to negotiate his double identity as English and Persian simultaneously. The Turks’ reply to Robert is very clear: ‘For Mahomet we die’ (VII.19).

Now it is the nameless Persian’s turn to present his demands:

Join Mortus Ali then with Mahomet,  
That slew your prophets Omar and Uthman  
And on a snowy camel went to heaven,  
And yet you shall find grace in Persia (VII.20-23)

The Persian shows his agreement with Robert’s earlier demand by using “then” in his speech. The impression one gets from this quotation is that the ‘Turks’ only believe in Muhammad and not in Ali (which is not true). Anthony Parr rightly notes that the playwrights drew on Geoffrey Ducket’s account for this part of the scene. The play clearly alludes to the sectarian differences between the Ottomans and the Persians in this passage and it was the result of travel narratives such as those included in Hakluyt and discussed above that brought this type of knowledge to early modern England. The Turks once again stick to the earlier reply: ‘For Mahomet, none but Mahomet’ (VII.24). The perception that the ‘Turks’ did not pay respect to Ali is erroneous but to heighten the impact and nature of the schism between the ‘Turks’ and the Persians, the playwrights have presented it in a manner that would impress their differences upon an audience. They have tried to show throughout the play that the ‘Turks’ owe their allegiance to Muhammad while the Persians do so to Ali and other Persian gods and the sun.

The image of Ottomans as devotees of Muhammad is also found in the other parallel scene offering conversion. The eldest of the three Sherley brothers, Thomas, is shown in the Ottoman jail. He is subjected to violence and force to ascertain the relationship between him and Robert Sherley who makes an effort to secure his release by offering the exchange of ‘Turkish’ captives for him. Once the ‘Turkish’ captors have used all means to bend him without success, the Great Turk himself comes to speak to him:

We stand amazed at thy constancy.  
 Yet answer us: wilt thou forsake thy faith,  
 Become as we are, and to Mahomet  
 Our holy prophet, and his Alcoran  
 Give thy devotion?—and by our kings we swear  
 We will accept thee in the place of kings. (XII. 107-112)

Thomas Sherley remains constant even after being offered the status of king in the Great Turk's dominion. He gets freedom on the intervention of the King of England and the Great Turk comes to know of his blood relation with Robert Sherley through the English agent who comes with the request of his release. The Great Turk tells the English agent: 'Had I known that, by Mahomet he had died' (XII.141).

While Halibeck and Calimath represent an anti-Christian face of Persia, the Persian Sophy is also painted as anti-Christian in one of the episodes towards the end of the play. The Sophy is shown to be an impressionable character when easily persuaded by a courtier to turn against Robert. The charges levelled against him are the sparing of the 'Turk' prisoners and having an affair with his niece. The latter is blown out of proportion by the complainants to the tune of rebelliousness against the Sophy. The Sophy is furious when he addresses Robert like this:

Ignoble Sherley, treacherous Christian,  
 How durst thou 'gainst the custom of our kingdom  
 Reserve those prisoners' lives? (XI, 89-91)

Robert Sherley informs the Sophy that in sparing the prisoners, he was not disobeying him but was exercising his Christian charity. On account of his ambition to become the Persian king, he assures the king that he had never thought of such a thing. Again he turns to the issue of prisoners and this time he has a different cause to spare them. It was out of his love for his brother that he did not kill the Ottoman prisoners. The mention of his brother gets an interesting response from the Sophy which reveals the dissatisfaction of the Sophy concerning Anthony's performance as an envoy of the Sophy to the Christian princes. The Sophy informs Robert:

Ambitious like own are his  
 Proceedings; 'tis brought to us by letter  
 How much he has abused himself and us  
 In his employment. (XI, 111-14)

Robert, at this point, clarifies that by his brother he did not mean Anthony but one older brother, Thomas who was captured by the Ottomans and was in their prison. Robert defends his right to free the 'Turk' soldiers to procure his brother's release and he is ultimately robbed of all his honour and stripped of his insignia. In some of the most persuasive speeches in the play, Robert highlights the intimacy among members of his family and the three brothers' services for their country and their religion. After a strange scene of his fake murder and upon knowing how much his niece loved Robert, the Sophy is so impressed that Robert once again becomes his favourite and he agrees to their marriage.

The last scene of the play presents the Persian Sophy as the great benefactor of Christians and Christianity in Persia. This is a mode of representing the Sophy that originated in some of the first reports of Shah Ismail's coming to power in Persia. The perception is so resilient that despite a number of other anti-Christian images throughout the sixteenth century, the image of Persian inclination towards Christianity has survived. The scene opens with Robert Sherley in conversation with a hermit. The hermit persuades Robert to convince the Persian king to allow the Christians to have a church in Persia. Persians are represented as pagans by the hermit who tells Robert that if the Persian courtiers object to his proposal, he should tell them that "Their god's His servant whom thy thought obey/ And win, as by persuasion kings are won" (XIII, 29-30). This is apparently a reference to the sun which Persians were thought to worship as is evident from the debate discussed above. Robert apologises to the hermit saying that "To argue a difference of that height/ Between their god and ours is so far unfit,/ I rather shall abuse than honour it" (XIII, 33-35). Though the hermit does not give up convincing him, Robert informs him of an other way of fulfilling his duty towards Christendom. He tells the "reverend father":

This present day I have an infant born  
Who though descended from the emperor's niece,  
A pagan, I'll baptise in Christian faith;  
Confute their ignorance, heaven assisting me,  
That mine own soul this comfort may partake:  
Sherley in Persia did the first Christian make. (XIII, 51-55)

Robert declares the emperor's niece to be a pagan which by extension makes the Emperor a pagan as well. Another important change here is the use of the title of emperor for the Persian Sophy both by Robert and the hermit. Was it a deliberate change by the playwrights



to conflate the early modern title of “Sophy” with the more archaic “Emperor” in order to show the multiple identities of the Persian ruler? Robert’s claim to have produced the first Christian in Persia is a propagandistic tool to underscore the significance of the Sherleys’ role in serving the Christian cause in Persia. The child’s baptism in Persia and the Persian Sophy’s role as his godfather caught the imagination of other contemporary playwrights and writers who lampooned this incident. This also demonstrates that the play was popular and was kept alive by comments in other works. One of the most popular comments on the scene is found in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* which was probably performed at the same place where *The Travailes* was performed in 1607. Two characters Boy and Citizen are discussing the theme of a play and the Citizen asks the Boy:

What shall we have Rafe do now boy  
 BOY. You shall have what you will sir.  
 CITIZEN. Why so sir, go and fetch me him then, and let the Sophy of Persia  
 come and christen him a child.  
 BOY. Beleeve me sir, that will not do so well, ’its stale, it has been had  
 before at red Bull.

(Gurr, 1968, IV.i. 30-35)

This reference to the staleness of the scene might be a reflection of professional jealousy, reflecting the popularity of the play. The same scene was again touched upon almost two decades later by another playwright which further shows the popularity of the play as well as other narratives concerning the Sherley Brothers. In Thomas Randolph’s play *Aristippus* (1630) one of the characters is a physician named Medico, and in a comic scene he briefs the other characters, four scholars, of the wonders his medicines have done in the past. In this regard, he mentions Sherley:

I cur’d Sherley in the Grand Sophies court in Persia when he had bin twice shot  
 through with Ordinance, and had two bullets in each thigh, and so quickly, that he  
 was able at night to lie with his wife the Sophies neece, and beget a whole Church  
 of Christians (Randolph, 1630, 25).

Though Randolph does not specifically mention Robert Sherley, the context of lying “with his wife the Sophies neece” makes it abundantly clear that he is talking about Robert. The reference to the hilarious idea that he “beget a whole Church of Christians” in 1630 reveals the fascination of Robert Sherley’s representation as a Christian in the Persian court.

The last scene of *The Travailes* contains one last ditch effort by the detractors of the Sherleys to disgrace Robert but they fail in persuading the king and their conspiracies are revealed. After sentencing Halibeck to death, the Sophy turns to Robert and tells him: “His honours and possessions are now thine” (XIII, 166) and asks what else he might desire. On finding the king gracious, he puts forward three requests: first, to baptize his son in the Christian faith to which the Sophy readily agrees saying: ‘Baptize thy child, ourself will aid in it,/Ourself will answer for’t, a godfather’ (XIII, 172-3). The second request is that he

...might erect a church  
Wherein all Christians that do hither come  
May peaceably hear their own religion. (XIII, 178-80)

And the Sophy’s response is: ‘’Tis granted, erect a stately temple./It shall take name from thee, Great Sherley’s Church’ (XIII, 181-2).

For early modern theatre goers, this would have been a marvelous spectacle. An Englishman planting Christianity in a pagan country! This image of Persia is radically different from the earlier image of Shah Tahmasp humiliating Anthony Jenkinson, telling him “O thou unbeleever...we have no need to have friendship with the unbeleevers...” as discussed above. The playwrights’ main concern is to highlight the achievements of the Sherley Brothers and this became possible only with a change of regime in England. A play of this kind could not have been performed in Elizabeth’s reign, but James’s foreign policy was different from Elizabeth’s. Even before ascending the English throne, he had sent a letter to Shah Abbas congratulating him on his victory against the Ottomans. His plans for the “reunion of Christendom” are traceable in the sympathetic treatment of the Pope as well as Catholicism in this play. The emerging picture of strategic alliance is visible in the Epilogue to the play where the Chorus requests the audience to imagine three brothers at three different locations: ‘Think this England, this Spain, this Persia’ (Epilogue, 11). This new triangle would never have been possible to visualize in an Elizabethan drama. Though trade considerations proved more vital than faith, the early years of James’s reign offer an extraordinary opportunity to dramatise and imagine the world in new and different ways than had been feasible under the previous regime.

### Conclusion

In 1607, while English theatre goers were being entertained in London by the Persian court and the status an Englishman enjoyed there, the Persian court was in the process of finalizing the arrangements of an embassy to European courts under Robert Sherley. Between 1607 and 1628, the year he died, Robert was constantly on the move between Persia and England. His first embassy traversed the whole of Europe from Moscow to London, visiting cities such as Cracow, Prague, Florence, Rome, Barcelona, Madrid and eventually London (Davies, 1967, 225-71). Though he failed in achieving the objectives of his embassy, his presence in Europe as a representative of Shah Abbas played a vital role in popularizing Persia in early modern Europe.

Persians were a popular subject for early modern European painters (Ingrams, 1974; Goetz, 1938). While in London for the second time as the ambassador of Shah Abbas in the 1620s, an anonymous artist painted Robert and his Circassian wife Teresia. In a recent exhibition at the British Museum entitled ‘Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran’, the two portraits were exhibited together. This is not the only time Robert was portrayed in Europe. Another double portrait of Robert and Teresia was done by the famous Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck in 1622 in Rome. Both portraits represent Robert and Teresia inversely, in the sense that while Robert is shown wearing a turban and elegantly embroidered Persian robes, Teresia, who was a Circassian, is painted as a European lady.

A close reading of the anonymous portrait of Robert (see Figure 4) reveals the ways in which it symbolizes early modern England’s encounters with Safavid Persia as well as the Ottoman Empire. The most obvious feature of the portrait is the turban on Robert’s head. The turban is more commonly associated with Islam and Ottoman Turks in early modern imagination as has been suggested by Nabil Matar and Matthew Dimmock (Matar, 1997; Dimmock, 2006). The phrase “turban’d Turk” (V.ii.352) as used by Shakespeare in *Othello* also reveals that early modern Englishmen visualized contemporary Muslims as “turbaned.” This is also reinforced by the fact that, like the term “turning Turk”, the

expression “taking the turban” also meant converting to Islam. What might Robert Sherley’s turban have meant to the English court?

Robert Sherley’s turban was undoubtedly considered a symbol of loyalty to a foreign sovereign, if not a symbol of infidelity in early Jacobean England. This is obvious from the conflict between Robert and the English King James I on the occasion of his audience in 1624. The King insisted that he wouldn’t see Robert if he was turbaned, while Robert was of the view that since he did not remove his turban in Spain and at the Emperor’s court, it was not proper to remove it in the English court. There are contradictory reports how the conflict was resolved. One suggestion is that the middle path was found by affixing a cross to the turban which represented Sherley’s early modern alliance between Islam and Christianity (Matar, 1997). The other view is that Robert agreed to remove his turban and lay it at the king’s feet with the condition that he would then be allowed to put it on again immediately (Briggs, 1838, 99).

Why Robert Sherley was not considered an outright Muslim is a result of the publicity the brothers had generated during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Day, Rowley and Wilkin’s play discussed in Chapter Five, and the other pamphlets and travel narratives concerning Persia, had established the Sherley brothers as benefactors of Christendom and Persia as allies of the Christians against the Ottoman menace. Robert’s donning of a turban was potentially scandalous, but his portrait reveals that English perceptions of the turban were undergoing a change by the 1620s. Robert’s dress and its visibility in the British court precipitate a new sense of the turban, not as a marker of religious identity, but rather a cultural phenomenon which the English needed to understand.

His turban, however, is only one aspect of Robert’s ‘Persian’ personality as depicted in the portrait. Even more striking is the silken embroidered robe that covers the greater part of his body. The fame of Robert’s Persian robe had reached England before he arrived in London as ambassador of Shah Abbas for the first time. This is evident from a short propagandistic work on Robert Sherley composed by Thomas Middleton in 1609.

Middleton compares his composition to the Persian robe and addresses his readers thus:

Reader, This Persian robe, so richly wouen with the prayes onely of Sir ROBERT SHERLEY (thy Conntriman) comes to thee at a lowe price, though it cost him deere that weares it, to purchase so much fame, as hath made it so excellent. It is now his, foreuer, Thine so long as it is his; for euery good man (as I hope thou art) doth participate in the Renowne of those that are good, and virtuous (Middleton, 1609, "To the Reader").

This "Persian robe, so richly wouen" clearly seems to allude to a robe as depicted in the portrait. But as Middleton's pamphlet predates the Sherely portrait under discussion here, it is possible to assume that there were reports of Robert's costume circulating in early seventeenth century London. If this is true, we can also construct how Robert Sherley was fashioned as a character in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*. The common feature of the play and Middleton's pamphlet is the figure of Sir Thomas Sherley, the oldest of the three brothers. Middleton dedicates his pamphlet to Sir Thomas while it is also suggested that he was instrumental in the staging of the play. It must have been through Sir Thomas that Middleton knew about the "Persian robe, so richly wouen."

The material used to sew the robe is clearly silk. As silk was the most important commodity of the Persian trade, Robert in his robe was a walking advertisement for the quality of Persian silk. Trade was the most important motive for English travellers to Persia from Jenkinson to the Sherleys and beyond. The Persians were also interested in diverting the route of their trade away from the Ottoman Empire in order to incur the financial loss to the latter (as discussed in the previous chapters). Robert Sherley's route from Persia to Europe both times reveals the possibility of Perso-European or Anglo-Persian trade avoiding Ottoman territory. Through his silken robe and his travels, Robert becomes a metaphor for the possibilities of trade between Persia and Europe.

Robert's robe is identical to the one now preserved in the Moscow Armory Chamber. The only differences are of colour and the addition of sleeves in the Moscow robe. Otherwise, they are designed with the same motif as is found on the main body of Robert's robe. In a recent article, Galina Lassikova has skilfully analysed the design of the robe and has come up with a new interpretation that can be employed to interpret the design of Robert's robe (Lassikova, 2010). According to Lassikova, the design of the robe in Moscow Armory Chamber depicts the story of mythical Persian Shah Hushang from Firdausi's *Shahnama*.

The figure with the stone in his hands is Shah Hushang who is trying to kill a dragon/snake. A bird is also seen on a tree, which can be identified as Semurgh and clearly demonstrates his hostility towards the snake. The story symbolizes the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

The exact date of the Moscow robe is not possible to determine as no records have survived, but Lassikova is of the view that this must have been a gift from Safavid Shah Tahmasb for Ivan the Terrible (Lassikova, 2010, 41). The robe reached Moscow with one of the embassies exchanged between Russia and Persia during Tahmasb's reign and the purpose of such embassies was to finalize a military alliance between the two states. One report quoted by Lassikova states that as a result of such negotiations, the Russian Tsar sent to Persia 100 cannons and 500 guns (41). "In the historical context," suggests Lassikova, "the battle between Hushang and the Dragon could be understood as the war of Tahmasb I against the Turks...At the same time, the rock used by Hushang alluded to a lack of weapons in the Iranian army" (Lassikova, 2010, 42).

The design of Robert's robe clearly features figures with rocks in their hands. While the Moscow robe replicates the same image all over the robe, in Robert's robe the figures have different dresses which suggest that they are not meant to depict Shah Hushang. But they do seem to be 'Persians' who are trying to kill a dragon with rocks and stones. Given the popularity of allegory in such costumes, it is plausible that the dragon was intended to represent the Ottomans, battled by the Persians with rocks in lieu of proper weaponry. The light figures may even represent European alliances. Yet regardless of the detail, the scene of mythical conflict enacted on Robert Sherley's costume encouraged such reflections, as well as stimulating a fashion for colourful 'Persian' clothing in a number of European courts. Such devices, when seen alongside the Moscow example, indicate again the extent to which Robert was an emblem of commercial and diplomatic exchange. Examined this way, the robe can reveal the whole story of Anglo-Persian relations from trade to anti-Ottoman alliance.

There is another aspect of the robe that makes it unique when compared with the Moscow robe. This is the outer layer that is designed with a different motif. What we can see from the portrait is a number of male and female figures in frivolous abandon complicating any

straightforward reading. The outer layer represents the lighter side of life while the inner layer tells the story of the harsh realities of life. This duality can also be read in the light of Robert's agenda as ambassador of Shah Abbas in Europe. The outer layer shows an aspect of Persian life designed to attract the Europeans to have commercial links with Persia. But this commercial interest was just one layer of the agenda. The real interest which is kept closer to heart both literally and metaphorically is to kill the "dragon" and the Persians have nothing to encounter the dragon with but stones.

The baton in Robert's hand is a further classicised feature of the portrait that symbolizes his mandate and power as ambassador. The baton reinforces Robert's military background which found expression in the play as well as other histories featuring the adventures of three brothers. This also reflects his master's ambition for co-operation between England and Persia against the Ottoman Turks which is evident from the other symbolism of his costume.

Robert's costume is not purely Persian. Rather, it is a hybrid mix of English and Persian elements. While his embroidered silk robe with decorated figures represents the artistic and commercial side of Persia, the ruff and the cuff were part of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English fashion. Robert's hybrid costume then becomes a reflection of his own identity. Hybridity is the most convenient term to describe Robert Sherley, some of which is clearly signalled in his costume. The term was popularized by Homi Bhabha and is mainly used to understand the cross-cultural exchange in colonial societies, but, as Daniel Vitkus suggests, it is a useful concept for an understanding of early modern exchanges between Muslims and Christians. According to Vitkus, "This approach can be helpful because it eschews the rigid binarism of Said's polemic and offers a conceptual system that can accommodate the dynamic interaction that took place in the Mediterranean-Islamic region" (Vitikus, 2003, 13). The same applies to Anglo-Persian relations in the early modern period, because the simple binaries of self/Other, Christian/Muslim and English/non-English are unable to fully explain the nature of the relationship between early modern England and Persia. Robert Sherley's portrait offers a perfect example. He is an English Protestant turned Catholic turned "Persian" who represents Shah Abbas in European courts to seek assistance against the "Turks." In him, we find the manifestation of the complex

phenomenon of sectarian divide in the early modern world in which the fate of the Catholic-Protestant schism was closely associated with the Sunni-Shia schism.

The hybrid figure of Robert Sherley in the portrait can be employed to understand the overall image of Persia in early modern England. Like Robert Sherley, the cumulative conception of Persia in early modern English writings can be described as hybrid. The conception of Persia in early modern England has a number of different dimensions. For early modern English writers, Persia was both a classical Empire as well as a contemporary power. The relationship between the two remains indistinct throughout the period. Furthermore, classical Persia is seen by some writers as an epitome of nobility and grace (Cyrus) while some others see it as a state ruled by tyranny (Cambyses). Like the classical Persian image, Safavid Persia also has an ambivalent image in the early modern English imagination. It is both anti-Ottoman and pro-Ottoman and by analogy anti-Christian and pro-Christian. This image develops from the differing policies of Safavid rulers from Shah Ismail to Shah Abbas towards the Ottomans and by extension towards Christendom. This Safavid Persian image moves from Shah Ismail as a great benefactor of Christendom as well as a proto-Christian king, to his son Shah Tahmasb who humiliated Anthony Jenkinson and made it clear that he did not like Christians, to Shah Abbas who again became a source of great interest in early modern Europe as an anti-Ottoman tool. What further complicates this scenario is the prominence of an anti-Christian “Sultan of Persia” in the Romance texts of the 1580 and 90s. Together, these elements make Persia in early modern England a highly complex entity, one I have attempted to delineate in this thesis.

Modern Iran occupies a similarly complex space. Pre-revolution and post revolution Iran present two greatly diverse spectacles for the West as well as the rest of the world. Such varied images bring Safavid Persia and modern Iran closer to each other in terms of their capacity to change and transform. Comparing these two periods in Iranian history and the involvement of Christendom/the West in Iranian affairs can lead to some conclusions that show the relevance of a study of early modern Anglo-Persian relations for contemporary east-west relations.

Safavid Persia and late twentieth century Iran present some interesting comparisons. The most obvious feature of both periods is the centrality of Shia Islam as a tool of national



identity. Shah Ismail's efforts to bring his subjects into the fold of his sect have an obvious similarity with the early revolutionaries' enthusiasm for exporting their version of Islam to neighbouring states (Abisaab, 2004; Louer, 2008, 177-93). However, from the Western response to the emergence of a Shi'a power under Shah Ismail in Persia was starkly different to the Western response to the emergence of a Shi'a power some five centuries later. Yet the response in both cases was determined by the same underlying reason: the protection of Western interests. As Shah Ismail and later Safavid rulers were thought to be a bigger threat to the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, the Christian courts were thrilled by the rise of an anti-Ottoman power in the form of Safavid dynasty. In the case of Iranian revolution in 1979, the first target of the revolutionaries' wrath was Western interests in the country and this was exemplified by the siege of the American embassy in Tehran. In both cases, nevertheless, Iran/Persia became an object of study and fascination in the West.

While early modern Europe attempted to capitalize on the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry by initiating diplomatic exchanges with the Persian kings, modern strategies have been the opposite. As Shi'a Persia was perceived to be a friend in early modern Europe for opening a new front in the east of the Sunni Ottoman Empire, the late twentieth century Arab and non-Arab Sunni rulers of the Muslim world became strategic allies of the Anglo-American block against anti-West and anti-Sunni Iran. The eight year long Iran-Iraq war from 1980-88 was a desperate bid to contain the Shi'a revolution within Iranian geographical borders, and Saddam Hussain was supported by all the oil rich Arab states as well as their Western allies to bring the new regime in Iran to its knees. Saddam's crimes against the Iraqi Shi'as were overlooked until Saddam himself emerged as a villain in the West and the rest of the Middle East by invading Kuwait and later in the context of two 'Gulf' wars.

The Muslim world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was divided into three major empires: Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal. By the late twentieth century, Muslims were divided into a large number of national states and in most cases had been freed from the shackles of colonialism. National Muslim states transformed a Muslim world already divided on sectarian, ethnic and linguistic lines into a much more complex phenomenon when compared to the early modern Muslim community. While mid-twentieth century

nationalism was a potent force in the Muslim world, it is possible to claim that, in the last quarter of the century, the sectarian division in Islam into Shi'a and Sunni has become the most important source of anxiety and trouble in Muslim societies. The anxiety which is demonstrated in the following examples brings to mind the anxiety Elizabethans might have felt on the news of Catholic Spain preparing an armada to attack the Protestant England in 1588. Alternatively, it is the same anxiety that the Ottoman Turks felt with the rise of a Shi'a state under Shah Ismail on their eastern flanks. The main difference between the early modern and contemporary situations is that in the early modern period sectarian division played an important role for both Christians and Muslims in aligning their positions with one group or the other. In recent history, while the sectarian division in the Muslim world is still a strong force, the Catholic-Protestant Christendom has been transformed into a general geographical term — 'West' — that now mediates between the Sunnis and the Shi'as.

In the recent past, the first expression of sectarian anxiety can be clearly discerned in King Abdullah of Jordan's use of the term "Shi'a Crescent" in December 2004 in the wake of the increasing Shi'a role in post-Saddam Iraq under the patronage of America (Anderson and Anderson, 2010, 228). By "Shi'a Crescent" the King meant a block of Shi'a states ranging from Bahrain and across the Persian Gulf, Iran through Iraq, Syria and concluding in Lebanon. This was a clear message to the Americans that they should be aware of the possible implications of rising Shi'a power in the Middle East for American interests, Sunni Arabs and Israel. It seems that the United States, which had not traditionally paid much attention to local sectarian politics, have taken it seriously in the recent years, as is evident from their recruitment of Vali Reza Nasr as advisor to the State Department. Nasr's book *Shi'a Revival* clearly shows how potent a dividing force the Sunni-Shi'a schism is in the Muslim lands and suggests pitting one against the other would help protect American interests in the Middle East (Nasr, 2006). Another example of sectarian politics is found in the recently disclosed cables from American diplomatic missions from all over the world by the whistle blowing website Wikileaks. Some of the first cables to be published by *The Guardian* and other papers that were given access to them fore-grounded schismatic differences between Muslim states. One cable attributed to the Saudi King Abdullah, analysed by Ian Black and Simon Tisdall, claimed that the King exhorted the American

government to destroy Iranian nuclear facilities (Black and Tisdall, 2010). The Saudi King's disdainful view of Iran's efforts to become a nuclear power might not be hidden from the Iranian authorities but what is significant in the cable is the role America is asked to play to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions. A similar story concerning Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari reveals the sectarian view at the highest level in the Muslim world. One of the cables mentions the United Arab Emirates' foreign minister Abdullah bin Zayed telling Hillary Clinton that the Saudis distrust Zardari because of his Shi'a background and were "creating a Saudi concern of a Shia triangle in the region between Iran, the Maliki government in Iraq, and Pakistan under Zardari" (Wikileaks, 2010). These reports of Muslim elites' sectarian views mediated through Western diplomats are in some respect similar to early modern reports of sectarian difference between the Ottomans and the Safavids, since both demonstrate the ways Western leaders have sought to record and exploit sectarian divisions in the Muslim world. The players have changed but they are all playing the same game.

These cables reveal an aspect of Muslim societies that is common between the sixteenth and the twenty first centuries—the central role that religion plays in the geo-politics of Muslim societies. Just as the Safavids and the Ottomans used their respective versions of Islam as a pretext of war against each other, in the same manner, modern day Sunni and Shi'a regimes still harbour distrust against each other on sectarian grounds. And just as early modern Europeans became interested in the idea of sectarianism in Islam and became allies of one party or the other—mostly allied with Safavid Persia—the same idea has once again become an important factor in Islam-West relations, but this time the West has allied itself with the Sunni world. The rise of a Shi'a state in early modern Persia coincidentally started almost at the same time as the Reformation initiated by Martin Luther in Germany. Early modern Europeans witnessed wars on religious grounds like early modern Muslims but religion in Europe and America has now been relegated to the periphery in the matters of state.

Such comparisons between early modern and contemporary situations can be illuminating, but it is also important to see how ideas concerning sectarianism in Islam or other perceptions of Persia developed over the intervening centuries. The original plan of this

thesis was to study Elizabethan and Stuart images of Persia, possibly until the Restoration, incorporating a study of John Denham's *The Sophy* (1642) and Robert Baron's *Mirza: a Tragedy* (1655). My research took me to the mysterious figure of Robert Brancetour in the period of Henry VIII and because of the sheer volume of material I un-covered, the Sherley Brothers became the subject of the last chapter as opposed to be the central part of the original plan. The thesis closes in the year 1607, the year of the performance of *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* in London. Many important events in Anglo-Persian relations took place after 1607 and these include the arrival of Persian embassies under Robert Sherley, the publication of Sir Anthony Sherley's account of his travels to and from Persia as ambassador of Shah Abbas in 1613, the arrival of Naqd Ali Beg in London as the 'real' ambassador of Shah Abbas and his scuffle with Robert Sherley. Moreover, the letters written by the factors of the East India Company in the years between Robert Sherley's first and second visit to London shed light on the Company's concerns regarding Persian trade. The first English diplomatic mission to Persia under Sir Dodmore Cotton (1627-28) and its impact of perceptions of Persia in England also needs further study. A number of world histories published in the seventeenth century discuss Persia as an important empire and all need to be critically studied so as to see how knowledge regarding Persia was gradually developing over the course of the seventeenth century. Towards the last two decades of the century, a number of plays on ancient Persian themes such as Settle's *Cambyzes King of Persia: A Tragedy* (1671) and Crown's *Darius King of Persia: A Tragedy* (1688) appeared which have never been given any attention by the scholars.

The early modern European experience of Islam and the Muslim experience of Europe can be helpful in guiding both parts of the world how to resolve their mutual problems. Richard Knolles' expression "the great terrour of the World" for the Ottoman Empire has been made to sound contemporary in the age of wars on 'terror'. But the same Ottoman Empire was the most important ally of England in the last two decades of Queen Elizabeth's rule. The same fluidity is also found in early modern images of Persia which is both seen in a positive and negative light at the same time in different early modern English texts and is exemplified in the portrait of Robert Sherley discussed above. Muslims and Christians have never been fixed friends or enemies. Those in the West who see Islam as their permanent enemy and those in the Muslim world who see the West as such are devoid of historical

perspective. The current state of relations between Islam and the West suggest a bitter sweet relationship, which can only be understood in the terms of a long, multifaceted and complex history.



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**Appendix**

Figure 1



Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Humiliation of The Emperor Valerian by the Persian King Sapor," circa 1521 now in Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland.



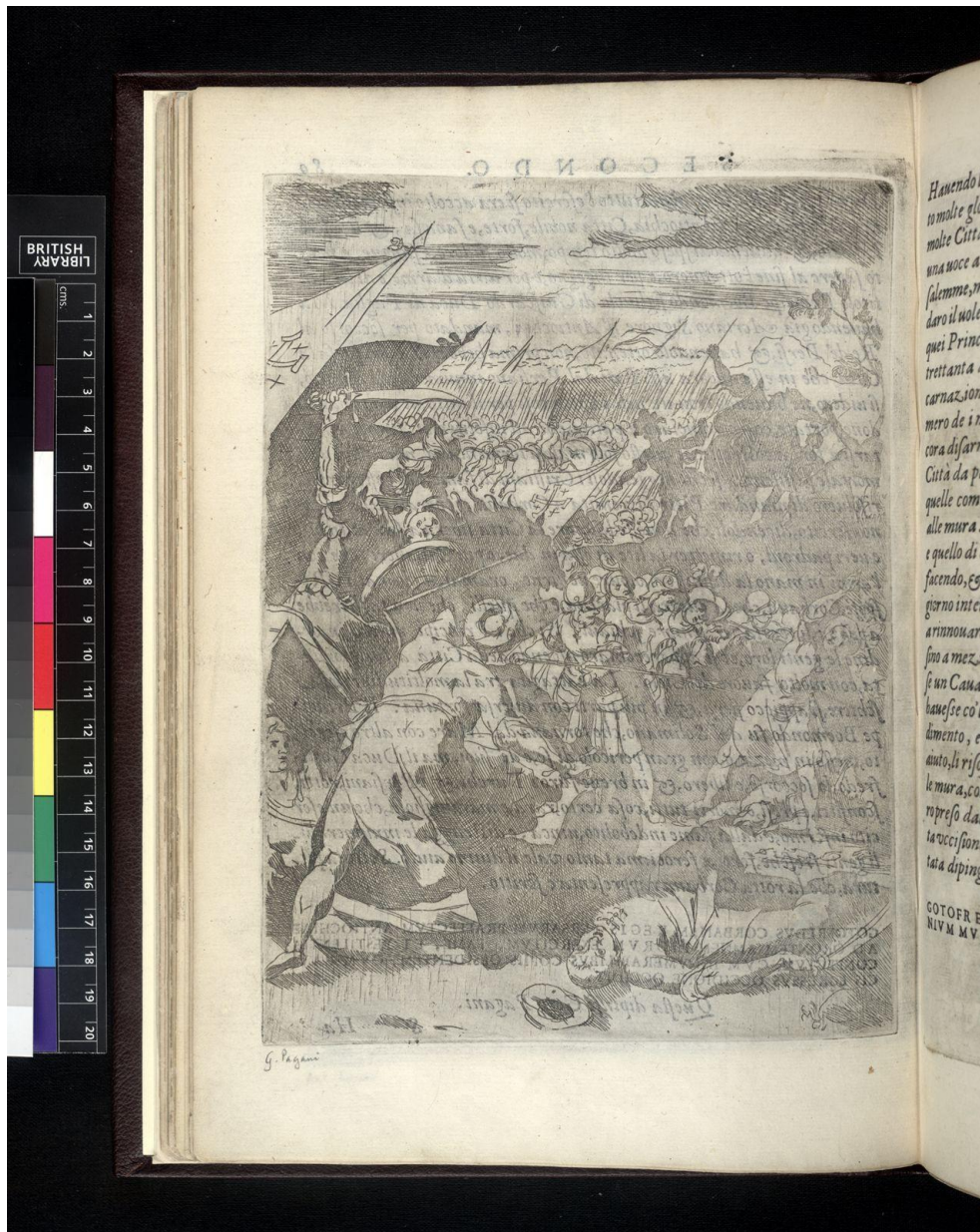
Figure 2



Shah Abbas, a bust protrait by Dominicus Custos, published in his *Atrium Heroicum Caesarum* (1600-1602), Augsburg, Germany.



Figure 3



R. GUALTEROTTI, (1589) *Della descrizione del regale apparato fatto nella nobile città di Firenze per la venuta, e per le nozze della serenissima madama Christina di Loreno moglie del serenissimo don Ferdinando Medici terzo gran duca di Toscana*, Florence, Antonio Padovani. p.88



Figure 4



Robert Sherley, circa 1624-1627 by an anonymous artist, now in the private collection of R. J. Berkley